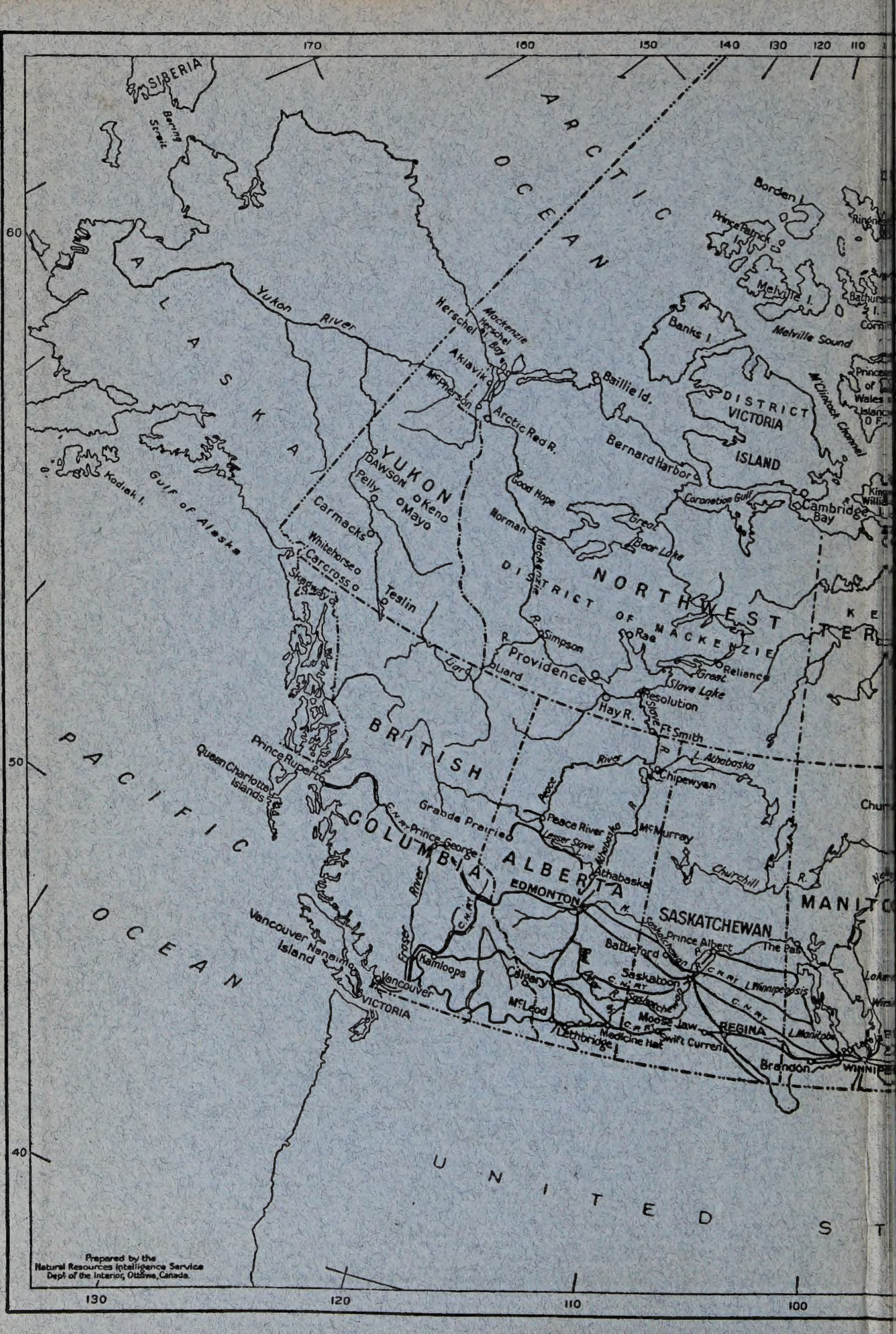
SONS OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

T. MORRIS LONGSTRETH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Good Hope
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Carcross
Skagway
Teslin
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Melville Sound
Banks I.
Baillie Id.
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Cambridge Bay
NORTHWEST TER
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Peace River
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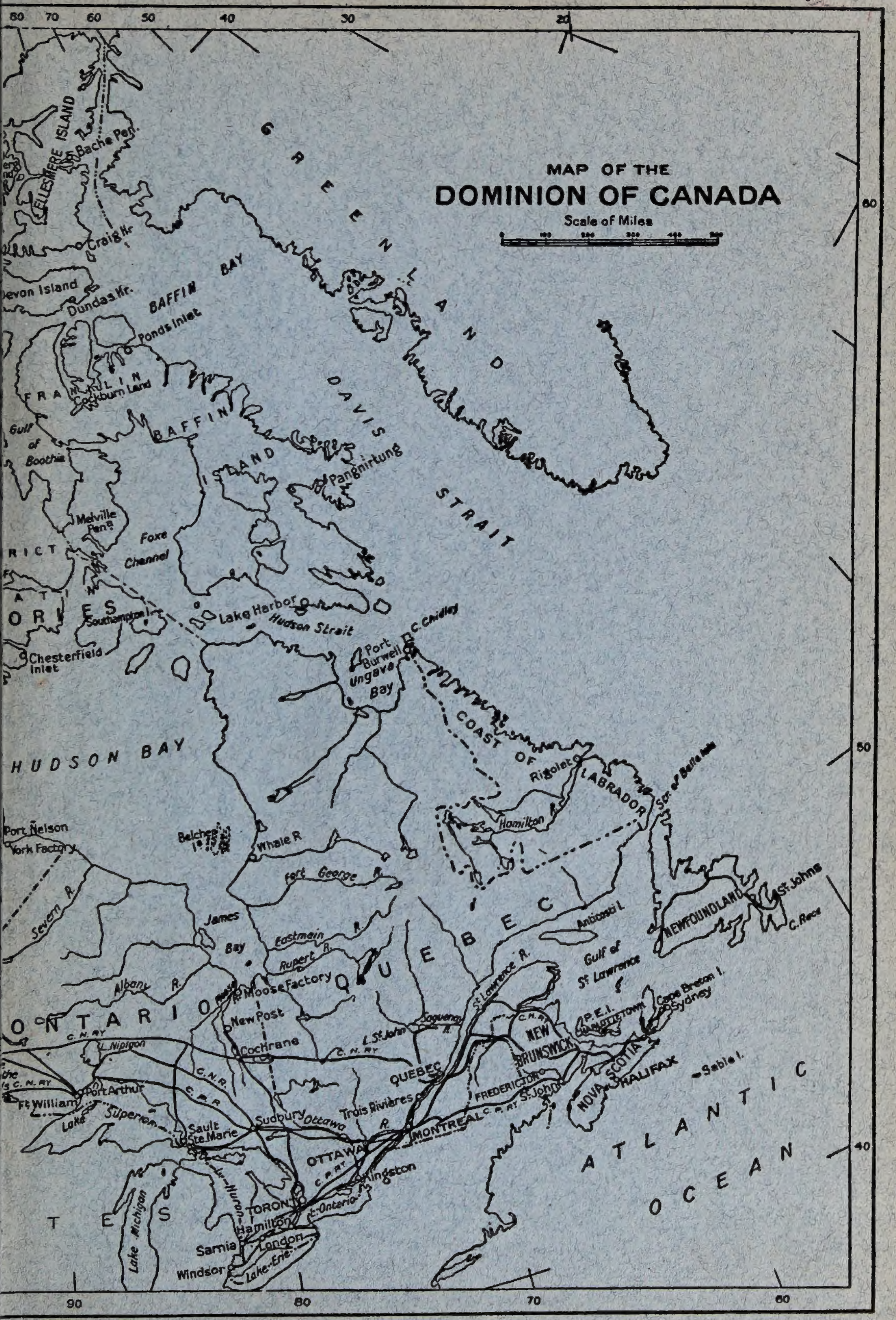

MAP OF THE
DOMINION OF CANADA
Scale of Miles
GREENLAND
DAVIS STRAIT
BAFFIN BAY
BAFFIN ISLAND
ELLESMERE ISLAND
Bache Pen.
Craig Hr.
Devon Island
Dundas Hr.
Ponds Inlet
Cockburn Land
Gulf of Boothia
Melville Pen.
Foxe Channel
Pangnirtung
Lake Harbor
Hudson Strait
C. Chidley
Port Burwell
Ungava Bay
Southampton I.
Chesterfield Inlet
HUDSON BAY
COAST OF LABRADOR
Rigolet
Hamilton R.
Str. of Belle Isle
Port Nelson
York Factory
Belcher Is.
Whale R.
Fort George R.
Severn R.
James Bay
Eastmain R.
Rupert R.
Albany R.
Moose Factory
New Post
Cochrane
QUEBEC
ONTARIO
NEWFOUNDLAND
St. Johns
C. Race
Anticosti I.
Gulf of St. Lawrence
St. Lawrence R.
Cape Breton I.
Sydney
P.E.I.
Charlottetown
NEW BRUNSWICK
NOVA SCOTIA
HALIFAX
Sable I.
Fredericton
St. John
L. St. John
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QUEBEC
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MONTREAL
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TORONTO
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THE MOUNTED POLICE

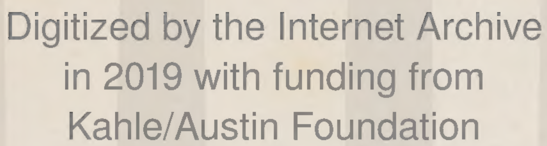
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Photo by Rossie, Regina

CONSTABLE—R. C. M. P.

SONS OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

BY

T. MORRIS LONGSTRETH

AUTHOR OF "THE LAURENTIANS,"
"THE SILENT FORCE," ETC.

Illustrated with Photographs and Map

THE CENTURY CO.
NEW YORK LONDON

16 19

PS8523 .O5S6

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First Printing, August, 1928

Printed in U. S. A.

To

COLONEL C. F. HAMILTON

AND

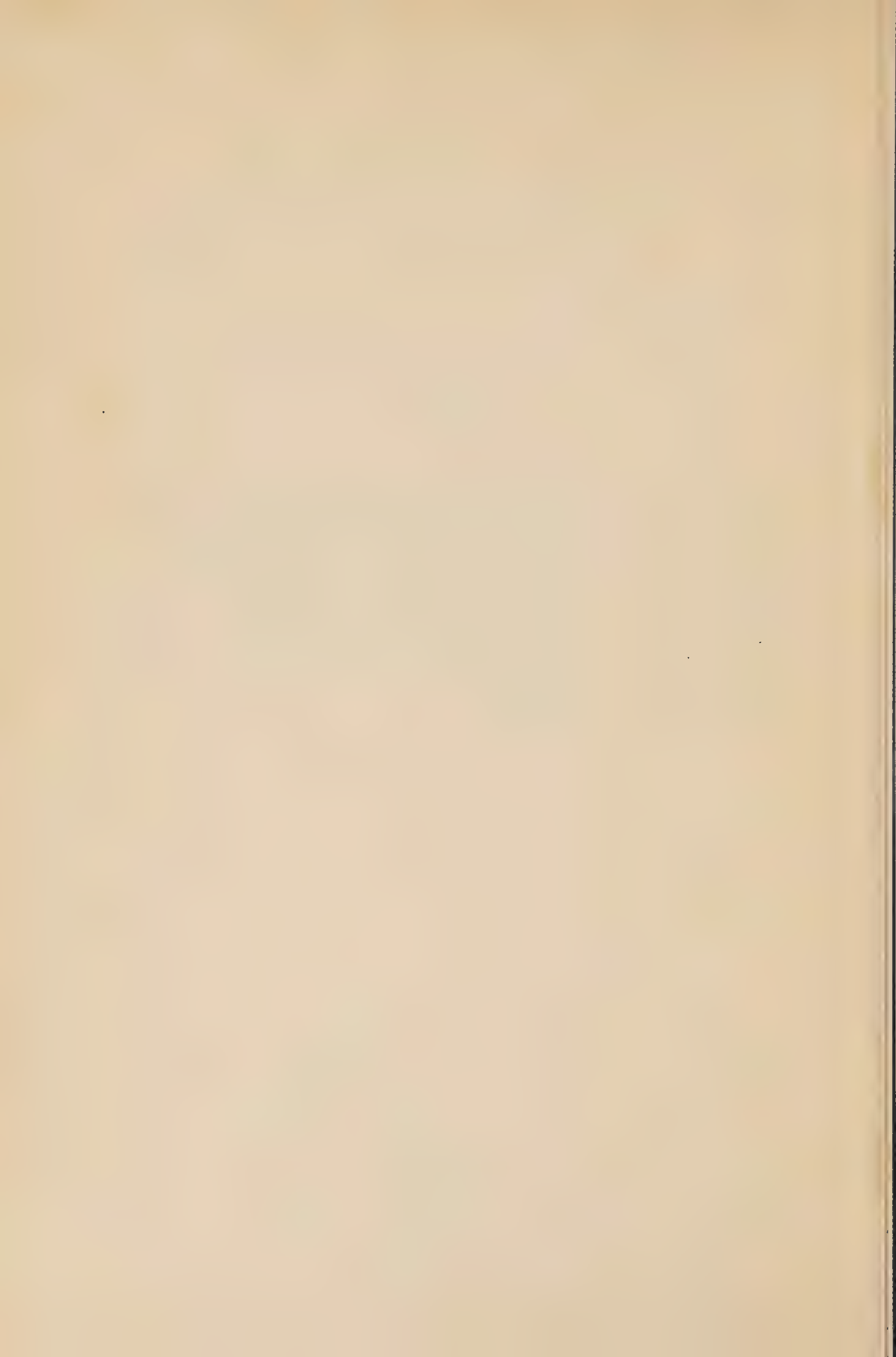
VERNON J. LaCHANCE

IN MEMORY OF HAPPY HOURS
AND AS A REMINDER OF MY
FRIENDSHIP

273124

NOTE

This book, while aiming to be veracious in spirit, is fiction in form, and the characters must be so regarded. As it goes to press the Force is about to resume all of its old duties in the Province of Saskatchewan, and the Province of Alberta is considering very favorably the resumption of the former status—steps which mark an era of increased usefulness and distinction.



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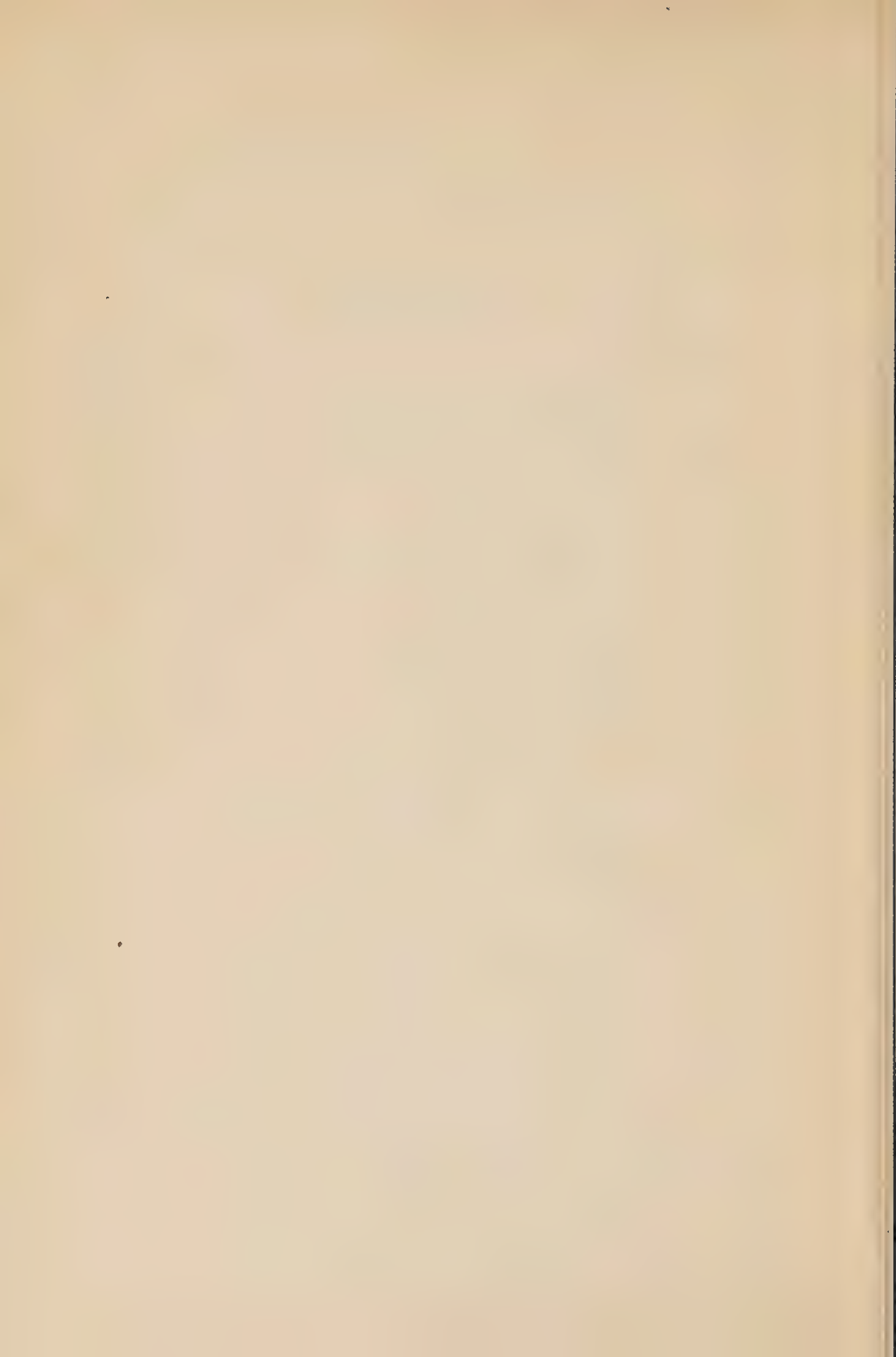

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SONS OF THE MOUNTED POLICE

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CHAPTER I

Joining Up

Of all the clubs in Ottawa, Bowles Restaurant, near the Union Station, is the most frequented and the least formal. The only introduction needed is a five-cent piece, and you may rest your bones without that. No member will be blackballed for wearing shanty-men's attire or for conversing in those direct idioms which the well-tamed dare not use, so he be not too loud. The doors never close.

As evening progresses and the hockey crowd arrives, the atmosphere grows more and more companionable. A taxi-driver drops in for a drench of coffee. Beside him will be seated a couple of young men with dinner-jackets beneath their overcoats, who have stopped for a nightcap of the same beverage. A tired loiterer from Hull leans on the polished hand-table to recuperate before his last lurch home. Mounted Police constables, whose passes expire at 1 A.M., meet here to share a taxi to their suburban barracks.

A soft light, which alone would differentiate this

resort from mere eating-places, reveals on discreet signs the price of beans or bacon, and bathes the rambling, haphazard friendliness of the scene. Late on a summer's evening of 1922 it fell on the face of a constant attender, a well-developed boy of nineteen or twenty named Peter Whaley, known, from his favorite game, as Stud.

He stood at the entrance, looking for somebody, and a frown at not finding the one sought drove the good humor from his usually good-humored face. He was clearly a boy of the people, his nose not precisely straight, owing to some street encounter, and his quality of average clay unweakened by aristocratic complexities. Health he had, and from some ancestor a good head, shaped for a life better than his clothes indicated. This first impression was, on an unprejudiced onlooker, a favorable impression. Stud Whaley attracted, largely because he liked.

He sought his bureau of information, the tobacco counter.

"Seen any of the gang, Shorty?" he asked.

"Bill and Alec was in here ten minutes ago, Stud, looking for you. They said they'd be back. Bill bought some 'Deities' for one of them Mounties. That one there," and the tobacconist jerked his head in the direction of a plain-featured man of thirty with his back to them, smoking a pipe.

"I didn't recognize him in those duds," and Stud went over to the Mounted Policeman. The man nodded as Stud sat down saying: "I didn't know you so quick. That uniform makes it sure easy to spot a fellow, doesn't it?"

The Mounted Policeman removed his pipe and said, "Hmm."

"I guess it's all fixed up," said Stud, after a pause.

"What is?"

Stud reddened. Had this man already forgotten yesterday? "I guess it's all fixed up we're to be Mounties, and not perhaps."

The Mounted Policeman again removed his pipe. "After all we told you?"

Stud's hand moved to his pocket. "I've got my application made out; so's Parrot."

"You're fast workers," remarked the Mounted Policeman, dryly.

It had been only yesterday. The four boys, Stud and Alec, Bill and young Perrot—naturally called Parrot—had been in swimming, and as they walked back up Rideau Street they had been startled out of their summer's rut by a squadron of Mounted Policemen, in uniform, parading past at a trot. The Police were new to the East then, and though the boys had seen them lots of times, this appearance got to them, as Bill put it. The sudden pull of the spectacle had dragged a bit of them after it. The scarlet had much the effect of band music, and they knew that men who wore hats at such an angle must lead happy lives.

It was disturbing. In the tedium of August the suggestion made to them by the establishment of a barracks near by took on new force, exerted a power it might not have exerted at a busier season. But even the urge and luster might have diminished after a night's sleep but for two happenings. At

Bill's invitation they all attended a show that evening, an expressive film which illustrated Mounted Police life and works. The boys realized that it might not be a literal transcription, but where there was so much fever there must be a little fire, they decided, and went around the corner to Bowles. Over pie they would reconsider their careers.

Bill Seaton, whose father was a director of the Consolidated Chaudière, had been, until that afternoon, preparing for college; Alec Chase was expecting to be a civil servant, while Perrot Laronde, whose father gardened for Sir William Lynd, was destined to take up the wheelbarrow as soon as he laid down the spelling-book: gloomy futures all, when men of their kidney should be lining up at the recruiting office of the Mounted Police. The large practical gap, however, between their present and their would-be future was chilling to the career-planners. Their wishes had not seemed to father any very useful thoughts, when they observed two of the Police, still in uniform, enter, put their swagger-sticks on the chair immediately beyond Alec, and walk away for food.

This was the other happening:

"You ask them, Alec," said Stud.

Alec had already determined to. He was nineteen, clear in thought and speech, Ottawa-bred, a mere boy as compared with the more street-sophisticated Stud or even Parrot, but the leader of this uneven association by virtue of his learning. Study was the stream of life to Alec, his consciousness was a run-

ning rill of curiosity. Parrot's dissipation was to take some girl of his own French-Canadian blood, with eyes black and shining like his, to the park on a trolley; Bill's, to take his girl of the moment there in his roadster, or else dance at the Château; but Alec was girl-free, alert in other directions. Even for the best friendship he was a little cold, a little too acute. Alec liked Stud as Stud, but he liked him better as a window into an existence not touched on in the Chase home.

The mature Mounted Policeman was undoubtedly surprised to hear Alec ask, "Is it possible for a man to get into your Force without influence?"

The corporal paused from devouring and regarded his questioner. "Sure, friend. I got in, and I didn't have the influence of a good mule."

"How does one go about it?"

By this time the constable beside the corporal had leaned forward to hear the surprising conversation, and Bill, knowing the essentials of courtesy, passed the cigarettes, forbidden at home but smoked abroad. Parrot was sent to purchase seconds on the pie. It became a party. The boys required but a syllable of sympathy to unload their hearts of every ambition, and the two Policemen saw that they were confronted by a serious case of romance. They listened with a not wholly concealed boredom; they offered common sense in return. It was fuel to fire.

"I guess you boys have been to the moving pictures," said the corporal.

They denied that the moving pictures had any weight. They denied that the sight of the uniforms had done anything more than set off the works; the works had been a long while preparing.

"We've seen horses before," said Bill.

"Yes, but you've never had to turn out at six every morning, fair or foul, and fuss with the brutes by the hour."

"I'd like that," said Parrot, who for once had not said much.

Alec had not said much, either, beyond asking the questions he wanted answered. He saw joining as a vast step forward, from buying detective magazines to practising their contents. The men's cold water merely set the concrete of his nature a trifle firmer. They went away at length, declining more food, more cigarettes, but they left a different set of boys behind them. And the corporal, who was older and more sympathetic under the rind than the constable, had mentioned his willingness to answer any questions on other nights he might be in Bowles.

And now Stud was sitting by him, unable to think of a question which did not sound silly. He was jarred from his predicament by a command to snap out of it, from Bill; the three stood before him and his Mounted Police friend—fat Bill Seaton, lean Alec Chase, little Perrot Laronde. The boys and the corporal went at once into executive session.

"Have you written out your note of application?" asked Alec.

Stud unfolded a piece of paper, which Alec read and passed to the corporal. It went:

Adjutant of the Mounted Police
Headquarters Division, Ottawa
Dear Sir:

Please except this as my application. I am a young British subject aged around twenty. I am interested in the Mounted Police and would like to get into them. I am full of action and adventure. I have a good physical body and no family ties. I hope there is a vacancy.

Yours respectfully,
PETER WHALEY.

"All jake," said the corporal. "How did you know to address it to the adjutant? I forgot to tell you that."

"I found that out," said Alec. "I asked one of the guards on the Hill."

"One of the chaps that keeps the Parliament buildings from being stolen," added Stud.

Bill arrived with meat and drink as Parrot handed over his letter for inspection:

The Mounted Police
Dear Sir:

As I am a follower of the Physical Culture life, I would very much like to become a Mounted Police. I would be greatly pleased and you would be doing me a great favor if you would kindly inform me what I would have to do and all particulars about it before I would be permitted to join. I think I could pass all the requirements. I can speak French. I am also a healthy lad and am a British subject. That is why I am writing. I hope you will do your best to encourage my good intentions.

Your friend,
PERROT LARONDE.

"The parrot as usual," commented Stud, critically. "You don't have to tell them all your past."

"I should hope not," grinned Bill, to whom Parrot's past, and present also, were matters of secret envy.

"Shut up, fellows," said Alec, "and let's hear what the corporal thinks. . . . Do you think that'll do, sir?"

"Sure. That letter ought to knock down a commission at least," said the corporal, smiling. One could not help smiling at Parrot when he was serious. His bead-black eyes, black hair, rather pale face, and somewhat slight figure were boyish, though controlled and owned by a person who wished to be taken for a man. Like a boy, Parrot was unaware of his chief gift, a fine generosity of nature. It dissolved the film of mutual estrangement between the French Canadian and his English Canadian running-mates. It made Stud feel paternal and showed Alec that he had something to learn, and it prevented the corporal from telling Parrot that, as concerned joining the Police, he had not a chance in the world.

"How did your family take the news?" Alec asked of Bill.

"Not too bad. Dad was all set against it at first, but when Mother started to cry, for fear I'd go anyway, he began to see something in it."

"Did you remember to tell them that you would be paid for getting educated instead of bleeding your dad?"

"You bet. He said he wondered he hadn't thought of that himself. I heard him tell Mother later that it

wasn't a life sentence anyway, and that he'd ask Sir William to say a word for us. Just mentioning Sir William smooths Mother down, and she got all excited asking me questions about the Force."

"Which you answered, of course," interposed the corporal, amused.

"Sure. It's the first subject I've ever struck they couldn't correct me on."

"Isn't that the truth!" exclaimed Alec, contemptuously. "Why is it, Corporal? I've asked a dozen people to-day about what the Force is doing—precisely, that is—and nobody knew. Why in the deuce is it?"

"There's a saying about far pastures looking more interesting," said the corporal. "It suits us fine," he added.

"I think it's stupid," said Alec. "It's stupid to know about everybody but yourself. In history class didn't they make us learn every battle ever fought in Europe? But just because the Mounted Police won our West without a battle, they're let out with a page."

"That's all old stuff," said the corporal. "Nobody wants to hear any more about that."

"You don't get my point," said Alec. "In the States, aren't they always talking old stuff? Pulling out Washington and Franklin and Paul Revere? Well, why shouldn't we raise a flag now and then to French and Crozier and Constantine? They did big things for Canada."

"How in blazes do you know so much about it?" asked Stud, who covertly admired Alec, especially Alec on the rampage. "I like to died yesterday when

you started lecturing the constable about his own gang."

"I can read, can't I?" retorted Alec.

The corporal rose to go.

"At this rate I'll be seeing you soon in barracks," he said, shaking hands. "I suppose you'll be having your medical examinations in a few days."

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Parrot. "Is it that we are examined?"

"Yes, shrimp of a bird," said Alec. "They take out all your bones and look them over."

"But it doesn't cost you anything," said the corporal. "Doctor Reckwith's a good sort, too."

"Why, he's our family doctor," said Bill, but the corporal was out of hearing. "He's great, isn't he!" Bill went on. "I only hope all the officers are as white as that."

"A corporal's only a non-commissioned officer," said the exact Alec.

"On the prospects," said Stud, "what do you say to another round of pie?"

Within forty-eight hours, replies to their applications had come from Headquarters in envelops marked, "On His Majesty's Service"—envelops which conferred a pleasant importance on the recipients. Fortunately for the boys' ambitions, the recent extension of the Force's jurisdiction made it possible to consider applicants of promise. So that afternoon the four filed into Dr. Reckwith's office, to find a man of fifty, plump and with graying hair, in a white coat. His eyes twinkled at sight of Seaton.

"What's this you're up to now, Bill? First I see by the 'Journal' that you're caught speeding on your way out to the Country Club, and now your father tells me that you want to join the police. Is it as a precaution?"

"This isn't that kind of police," said Bill. "We're going to be Mounties."

"So that's it. Off to the prairies to be frozen to death. That's no double-chin job, Bill," and the doctor looked, smiling, at the rest. Bill loved to be lazy.

"Who wants a double chin?" asked Bill.

"My mistake. Best thing for the country if all of you young fellows with steam in your boilers had to go. Now strip, please."

Stud was the first to stand clear of his clothes, being careful to hide his rather ragged underwear beneath the rest. The doctor pointed to an anchor tattooed on his arm, and Stud explained that he once had thought of hitting off to sea in his father's wake.

"A flying-fish would be a better totem for you than an anchor," suggested the doctor. "Now stand up straight for a change."

Stud did, and Alec the analyst noted the improvement. Seeing him stand there rugged, coarse-fleshed, hairy, unconcerned, Alec wondered why Stud did not appear more impressive in his clothes, and now he decided that his slight sloppiness of bearing made the difference. Stud's life had been conducive to lounging habits. He had been selling papers at an age when Alec was learning how to use a library and Bill his dancing-pumps. Lacking a home, he had slept at an uncle's, but as little as possible. His occupations

were somewhat seasonal; his favorite pastime was to follow the races, but friends who wished to find him after supper sought most successfully at the station, where he loved to watch the trains pull out, or in George's pool-room. He was one of those young men who at twenty are competent in a dozen ways of procuring the dollar, never quite hard up, their vices under control, and able, if stirred by an adequate desire, to meet the emergencies of choice. Alec's companionship was the best thing that ever had happened to Stud, and Stud knew it.

The doctor found him sound, his chest averaging better than the thirty-five inches required and his height a five feet ten. Bill was next.

"I suppose you call that the raw material of fame," said the doctor, pinching a collop of flesh on Bill's ribs. "You sack of meal, I wish I could watch them work you over into starch!"

But Bill passed, and the doctor turned to Alec with, "Well, what is your reason for joining this wild outfit?"

"Oh, he thinks he's Sherlock Holmes," Bill cut in.

"He's reading up on how to tell fingerprints from cow-tracks," ventured Parrot, who often suffered from Alec's gibes.

"You don't have to ask me after hearing those bright boys, do you, Doctor?" said Alec, quietly. "But there's one thing certain. I'm not going to be just a motion-picture Mounty. I—"

"That's right, breathe in," said Dr. Reckwith, but as he continued to listen he became more intent, and finally asked Alec if he smoked much.

"Just a little, Doctor, and not at all after hockey starts."

"You're good at hockey, I take it."

"I like it."

"But it doesn't like you, son."

"What do you mean?" Alec's voice was perfectly steady.

"It's a trifle hard on the pump. Can you take it a bit easier this winter? Lay off hockey altogether? I'm sorry, but you simply couldn't stand the gaff at Regina and I've no right to tell the Government that you can."

"Of course not," said Alec, but it did not require great discernment to see the blow he had received. Stud and Bill had stopped dressing. This was serious. Alec was their speaker, their master mind, and, for all his sharp comments, their friend. For a troubled moment his long sensitive face studied the doctor's, but it was characteristic of him to say nothing of regret but simply to ask, "What other way is there?"

It was a question put in even tones, but for Alec its very meaninglessness implied deep emotion. There was no other way, as he instantly perceived. His friends must go on without him. He turned away and was glad when the doctor busied himself with Parrot.

"Two inches missing, my boy," said Reckwith, kindly. "You've got to grow two inches before you can strut around in a scarlet tunic. But I might as well put you through your paces while you're here. There's no telling when they may need an assistant trumpeter."

Laronde's dark lashes fell, but he breathed in and exhaled and watched the doctor's face with anxiety. And when the last figure was written down he asked, "Am I good?"

"You're sound, if that's what you mean," smiled the doctor, "but I don't think you're very good."

The others exchanged amused glances. Parrot's habits seemed precocious, to put it mildly, to Bill, and often caused him to ponder, though by his very habits was Parrot related to Stud whom he worshiped. Nor did Alec voice in sermons the variance he felt in their ways of looking at conduct; indeed, he was a little sorry that he could not achieve Parrot's light-heartedness, both physical and moral.

The four filed soberly from the doctor's office, and once beyond his hearing, they grew vociferous with suggestions, Bill offering to postpone his going West until spring, when Alec might be strong. Alec convinced both him and Stud that they could postpone nothing, since they would hardly have the chance again if they quit now, and he directed the conversation from himself to Parrot.

"It's you that we've got to watch out for, you whited chimney," he said. "One thing, Parrot, you've had your last cigarette."

"That's right, kid," Stud agreed paternally. "If I hear of you busting that rule, I'm coming East to knock your block off."

"And the same holds for your other vices," commanded Alec.

"Beer?" asked Parrot, plaintively. "Not a glass even?"

"Not a glass, kid," said Stud. "But you can have a whole bottle every time you've grown an inch. We'll be fair about that. I'll blow you to it myself."

But despite the pleasure of sitting upon Parrot, the four parted somberly. Only an inner compulsion new to Stud kept him from chucking this undertaking. Alec alone appeared undepressed. Parrot's secret hope that he might go, after all, was dissipated by a notification from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that a trumpeter was not then needed. The days before Stud and Bill would leave for the training depot at Regina were difficult. Fortunately the pangs of parting were dulled by the excitement of it.

"I'm glad I can't see you in uniform," said Alec to Stud, as they stood before the gate marked "North Bay, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary, Vancouver." "That would be too much."

"You can always come out and be a criminal," replied Stud. "That's another way of joining the Police."

Then the gate had opened, separating them. Alec determined that it should not be forever.

CHAPTER II

Introduction to Regina

STUD and Bill leaned on the window-sills of their tourist sleeper and watched sea-flat Saskatchewan roll by. Their third sleep had almost washed Ottawa from their memories. In a few minutes the first houses of Regina would appear.

The boys were thinking. In Ottawa, Bill had always been somebody, the son of his father at least, and something of an asset to his companions. He had good blood in him and no meanness, and it was not vanity in him which considered Stud rather lucky to be one of his associates; it was an attitude borrowed from his home atmosphere. This lolloping son of a financier was not snobbish in himself, and Stud continued to be one of his associates, in spite of the complaints of Bill's mother. And now Bill was glad.

For in that progress across the thousand miles the statures of Bill and Stud had been exchanged. Bill had got his tourist berth with unspoken condescension. Now he congratulated himself on having Stud for a friend. No better man lived, as he saw with new clearness, to stand by one in a situation, particularly if one were inexperienced. Would Stud stand by him? Bill never doubted it.

And Bill was right; for Stud, though inconstant at work, was constant in his few male affections.

Stud's knock-around life had given him a perspective in human inequalities, he foresaw the thank-you-marms ahead, especially ahead of Bill. The shocks to his own system would be more bruising with Bill on his shoulders, as he foresaw too. But in Stud's code no crime was blacker than stepping from under. He would stick by Bill, even as Alec would in his place. The determination warmed him.

The train was slowing down.

"We'll know they've seen us when we hear the band," said Bill, with a nervous laugh.

There was no band, however, no one to meet them, not even a visible interest on the pedestrians' faces when Bill, asking directions to the barracks, invariably added, "We're recruits."

They were lugging their suitcases to the trolley when Stud caught sight of a fleck of scarlet coming toward them; a uniform, a member of the Force—their own Force, as they remembered now. He would be their first colleague, brother in arms. They waited, with fraternity in their very bearing, but he was passing them, rather blindly as it seemed to Bill, when Stud asked, "This way to the barracks, sir?"

The constable was young, they now observed, and most pleasantly burned, but with a cold blue eye. It was the way he carried himself that had given him that air of authority.

"I'm going out in the truck soon, if you want to go out."

"We're recruits," Bill was saying.

The cold blue eye diagnosed Bill's air, mistaking his imitation ease for freshness.

"Is that so? Coming West to make the outfit famous, I suppose?'

"If we can," Bill admitted.

"Well, just wait here," and the constable entered the post-office.

Stud groaned and opened up: "Now you've torn it, you big bum! Now you've got us in good and wrong. Didn't you see the catch? Where's your bean?"

"Where it always was," replied Bill, warmly.

"Then throw it away and get another. You're in a different country. When you feel like saying something, shut up."

"Oh, stuff it . . ."

"I'm just telling you."

A hot silence fell on them, and continued as they carried their bags behind the constable to the truck; nor was it interrupted while they rattled west on Dewdney Avenue. The constable did not even ask those questions which Bill supposed would be inevitable to a common humanity.

But if Bill was forced to suppress the remarks which rose against his teeth, he had the more attention for his situation. Bill's knowledge of the Mounted Police had come chiefly from the movies or some soft-bottomed fiction, and his memory was a tureen of thick heroics seasoned with very little fact. He imagined them as everything but what they were—ordinary men who had learned a difficult profession. But as the town of Regina fell behind and the cluster of Mounted Police quarters emerged

AIR VIEW OF BARRACKS, REGINA

on the open prairie ahead, the fact of their actuality struck him with the force of a discovery.

It was startling to find that these creatures of legend lived under roofs. But there they were, historic roofs under which the Force had got its training since the days of the buffalo. Out of these very gates which they were aproaching had once ridden the patrols which shouldered the bounds of Canada farther and farther on. Young fellows like himself, thought Bill, had watched for that flag flapping there on its pole as they returned from amazing errands, with an equally amazing modesty. He must be modest; Stud was right.

But as the truck lurched into the barracks square, a glory swept him, for was he not already one of these men?—one of the famous Force, even if as yet untried? He would show Stud, Alec, everybody, though modestly of course. He glanced at Stud, who seemed to be interested in his finger-nails.

The non-committal constable stopped before a handsome building with stone steps.

"You'd best go in there and report to the division sergeant-major."

"How'll we know him?' asked Bill.

"By the foam on his jaws," snapped the constable as the truck leaped away.

"That's two against you," said Stud, sourly.

At the head of the stairs they were confronted by a machine-gun, and beyond it an open door disclosed a uniformed man talking to a constable who was standing rigidly before him. The constable's

expression was not happy, and as the two boys could not help hearing what was said, they soon knew why. The man doing the talking spoke crisply and without apparent anger, but his words drove his one imperious meaning home.

"You're a disgrace to this outfit, Sorley," he said. "Three charges on your defaulter's sheet in as many months. You ought to know by now that I won't put up with it. Fix that fact in your mind, if you have one. The next time you break barracks, the cold world for you, and all the Ministers in Ottawa won't save you. What have you got to say for yourself?"

The boys could not hear what Sorley had to say, but the sergeant-major broke in again with: "What's that? Oh, no, no, no! Those trips to town are not for you. Cut them out, Sorley. Cut everything out. You're carrying your last chance in your hand, I warn you; don't stumble . . ." Again the voice was cut off.

In a few moments Bill and Stud stood back to let their brother pass. They wondered that he seemed neither chagrined nor fainting, and then they looked at the bulldoggish N. C. O. whom they must face.

"Foam on his jaws, all right," whispered Stud, and knocked.

He was a compact, well-weathered, neat figure of a man, nearing forty, and Stud thought that among his varied acquaintance no man had stood out as masculine as this. It was not his size; Stud was as tall. His power lay in the obvious fact that he had no doubt of his powers; yet when he greeted them, even after the ferocity of his just finished interview,

Stud could discover no baleful fire in his eyes. Instead, the lines etched on his face curved into something like cordiality. After the fewest questions he notified the adjutant, in the office opposite, of their arrival, and the boys could tell by the sergeant-major's manner that he was speaking to a superior.

The adjutant, Inspector Tappet by name, had not the granite character of the sergeant-major, as Stud quickly noted. His face was softer, his manner somewhat overemphasized, and his more open greeting was not deceiving to Stud; the less judicious Bill thought him nicer. He instructed the sergeant-major to parade them before the assistant commissioner.

The boys entered a sunny room, furnished barely with chairs, maps, and a desk behind which was seated a spare graying gentleman in a uniform of dark blue. To Bill's class-room mind sprang the picture of Sir Roger de Coverley in military dress, and the man's voice betrayed a kinship to that compassionate gallant.

"I have received notice," he said, after greeting them, "that you have already taken your oaths of allegiance and office at Headquarters. You men realize, of course, that you are entering a corps with a reputation to uphold. You have come for a training, an education. The work will be new to you and seem exacting. Men sometimes imagine that they have come to Regina for a holiday in the country, others consider the Depot a prep school. But they imagine wrongly. I am under pressure to turn out good peace officers as quickly as is practicable, and I have a tradition to serve, a tradition which your

predecessors have handed down. You are here, men, to learn that, just as much as to learn your drills. . . . Constable Seaton, for what reason did you join?"

"Because I've always read about the Force and wanted to be in it."

"Say 'sir,' " whispered Stud.

"What work have you engaged in?"

"Mostly school work, sir. But I used to mow the lawn some."

"Have you any hobby?"

"Driving a car, sir."

"But your record says that you can ride."

"A little, sir."

"You will have a chance to perfect yourself," said the urbane officer, with the least suspicion of a smile. "Constable Whaley, why did you join?"

"I was tired of knocking around, sir. I wanted to do something."

"How much knocking around have you accomplished?"

"I hit the toboggan pretty early, sir. I had a paper route in Ottawa, and then I jerked soda in Montreal, and worked in a paper-mill up the Gatineau, and I was a painter for a while, and once I rode a blind as far as Quebec. But I guess that wasn't the right direction, sir. I guess I wanted to come West."

"Well, here you are and I hope you find that this is the life you will fit into. . . . Sergeant-major, parade these men before the adjutant for further examination."

Bill left the presence well pleased with himself.

He determined to write Alec at once, letting him know how cordial the really important members of the Mounted Police were and how readily they recognized merit. The attitude of that constable on the truck now appeared amusing rather than irritating. Bill was happy.

Stud, on the other hand, as he left the tall, spare officer, felt smaller than he had ever felt before. This meeting had been his first introduction to decorum; it had given him his first inkling of the dignity possible to a position. He had never before guessed that this Force was so important. This officer, gentle as he was, represented, as Stud could see, something solid, sound, unshifting, big. Stud was disturbed with a feeling of insufficiency foreign to his nature; he had also a perception of something worth attaching himself to. For Stud was rough but not dense. Never in his life had he been in a situation where his merits would be appreciated; at the best, before, he had had only to cover up his faults. This was different. The gentleman in the blue uniform had made him feel that one mattered.

Through the adjutant's examination Stud's mind was still in the sunny room, and even when the division orderly, a spruce and friendly constable named Gilred, took them to "C" block, a long building on the south of the square where they were to live, Stud seemed to Bill moody and unresponsive. Bill was on the crest.

Their barrack-room held a dozen cots and in Bill's eyes looked excessively bare. Stud asked him if he had ever seen a room so clean. Here dirt appeared

to have been finally and eternally subjugated, the first Police victory.

"Noon stables" was just over and the men—clothed not in a blaze of scarlet, as Bill expected, but in khaki-colored canvas slacks, prosaic and useful—were returning with bridles over their arms. Bill experienced an impression not of valor but of toil, and a twinge of homesickness beside. There were so many new faces and every one of them so totally unconcerned with the new recruit. He felt excluded, ill at ease, and Stud's unconcern matched theirs. He did not appear even to have noticed the influx of noisy strangers.

"It's going to be just like college," said Bill, hopefully.

"You think so?" Stud's face was hard as Bill had once seen it before a fight with a Hull gang.

A couple of constables lit cigarettes and sat on the bed next to Bill's, looking through Bill and beyond him without noticing him, as if he were just so much air. But they could not help it if he heard them, thought Bill, nor he help listening, though the talk was hard to follow. They were browned like Aztecs from a summer's riding, and under their skin flowed a careless health.

"Did you see Drafty get it, Handsome?"

"No. Did Drafty get it?"

"Just where it was coming to him."

"On the carpet with Sorley, do you mean?"

"No, out at stables just now. Old Seven-O-Six grabbed him in the pants. Drafty bent down for

something and the horse couldn't resist that lovely morsel. You ought've heard Drafty squeal."

"I'll bet the S. M. laughed like a fool," said Handsome.

"How else would an S. M. laugh?" demanded a constable without humor. "Shove up, you fellows." And he sat down.

"Manett would laugh if his pets bit one's head off," said Handsome.

"Think you'd miss it?" asked the newcomer.

"I don't attach the same importance to it as you do to yours, Ivry."

A general grunt of laughter came from the back of the room, with "That's handing it to him," from a distant corporal. Bill noticed that the constable they called Handsome was the only man in the room who looked like a Mounty as depicted in the illustrated magazines. This man was apparently English, tall and fair and eminently good-looking, but with none of that Englishness which sometimes marked the visiting financiers who came to his father's house. Handsome's eyes now fell on Bill and to divert the talk, before the saturnine Ivry should score back, he nodded to the recruit and asked, "From the East?"

"Ottawa," said Bill, glad to be included at last. "How'd you know?"

"This is a detective outfit, remember, brother."

"That's so," assented Bill, without any uneasiness which the instant calming of the conversation might have warranted.

"It's even easier telling where everybody's going to," continued Handsome.

"How?" asked Bill.

"He means to the devil," explained Stack, who was a quiet older man, willing to give Bill a chance.

Bill had the sensation of a bather whose toes just touch bottom, but he simulated swimming on through the conversation.

"I didn't know horses would bite," he remarked.

"You didn't?" in a low chorus from the bed.

Stud looked up, for the first time, at the three—Stack, whose face experience had battered a bit, Handsome, looking as if he had never frowned in his life, Ivry, the most interesting to Stud but the portrait of a riddle to him—and he wondered if he should ever feel the assurance that they looked, sitting on top of a man's world as if they owned it. He saw that they would be good friends or good enemies, he was careless which, if he could win to their level. He wanted to kick Bill for not shutting up until he found where he was, and now the ass was asking for a razzing, with that fool remark about horses biting.

"I didn't know it either," Handsome was saying, "until a beastly thing happened. Do you remember, Ivry, when that stallion bit Constable Teamer in two?"

"Really?" exclaimed Bill, as the others nodded.

"Well, not absolutely in separate halves, but very nearly."

Bill lowered his voice: "Did he die?"

"Need you ask?" Handsome's tone conveyed re-

proach. Bill hardly knew what to say. There was a pause.

"Drawn your kit yet?" asked Stack, kindly.

"My clothes, do you mean?"

"Clothes and everything," interposed Handsome. "If you haven't, take a hint from a friend and keep your eyes peeled. Don't let them billet any phony stuff on you, nor force any drills on you the first week."

"Insist on short stables, too," said Ivry. "No good putting your head in the noose before you have to, and naturally they'll take advantage of your ignorance."

Bill was perplexed. Why should the officials take advantage of the ignorance they were supposed to correct? The officials had seemed extremely solicitous so far. But these brother constables had won through the mill and should know. Bill listened to Handsome telling Stack of his refusal to accept guard-duty before his seven days were up. Bill hoped that Stud was getting these pointers; Stud did not look alert, as Bill imagined he should. Could it be that Stud was not so bright as Bill had thought? Were these pieces of information passing over his head? When another lull occurred, Bill, in a slightly louder voice, asked Handsome what he had meant by "phony stuff."

"Old stuff," replied the constable, pleasantly; "rifles that've been used before, or uniforms with moth holes or the ravages of other insects. Keep your eye especially on that smarty the quartermaster-sergeant. He tried to work the old gag on me."

"What old gag?" asked Ivry, interestedly.

"Palming off a second-hand sentry-box on me."

"He did!" and Stack added a forceful epithet to express his sense of outrage.

"You're right he did," said Handsome, angrily, "but I insisted on a new one."

"I should think so," said Ivry.

"Did you get it?" asked Stack.

"Of course I got it," said Handsome. "Did you ever see a quartermaster-sergeant who wouldn't back down if you faced him properly? I got an all hickory one, at that. This climate's beastly hard on sentry-boxes, brother. . . . I suppose they haven't measured you for yours yet?" Handsome was looking now at Stud.

"Speaking to me?" asked Stud. A hush spread about the room, and the men saw, apparently for the first time, this newcomer with his not quite straight nose. "Well, if they're as slow at doing what you say as they are at measuring up new fellows around here, I guess Bill and me don't need to worry about that piece of our uniform yet."

The rest of the room laughed.

"He's called you," shouted the distant corporal. "The drinks are on you, you big stiffs."

"And serve us right," came Handsome's too smooth voice, "for trying to pull that chestnut on a new high-grade ree-cruit."

The dangerous hush fell again. The blood was pounding in Stud's ears, but they caught the first note of a trumpet. The loungers sprang galvanically

to life. The roomful poured downstairs. As the corporal neared Bill he nodded.

"That's mess," he said. "You'll catch on." But he touched Stud's shoulder kindly. "My name's Ralstead, Corporal Ralstead, Whaley. I'm in charge of this room. If you've got any knots you can't untie, bring them to me. They're a good bunch in this room."

CHAPTER III

Muscle into Man

To Stud it seemed that only an angry Providence could have permitted reveille at 6 A.M. In his scheme of life no schedule, no regularity had played a part. Only for short periods had he ever had anything to rise for. Judging by the speed of the others, however, a second snooze was out of the question. He woke the still slumbering Bill.

It was strangely chilly for September, but the more conducive to haste. By persistently nagging themselves and each other along, the two recruits were only a minute behind the rest for roll-call. Stud was still sleepy-eyed and not especially sensitive, but he could tell by the sergeant's glare that he was being hated. He noticed that three men were excused.

"They're the blessed sick," whispered a bullet-headed constable beside him. "I'm going to pinch some disease, myself, if it gets a bloody bit colder."

Stud made a mental note of this alternative and found himself being marched off to stables, where a horse was assigned to him for his sole use and care, especially care.

The assignment struck on the rock of Stud's heart and opened it. Ownership was a new and irresistible touch. Stud's pride had never been indulged by pri-

vate ownership of anything, and to be made a party to this responsibility stirred a new feeling deep among his energies.

"First pick out his feet from the near side, Constable," he heard the curt voice of the sergeant, who also had not yet breakfasted, saying, "and at the same time examine his shoes. Then head about, remove halter, and groom his head, neck, and forequarters, brushing the mane and foretop. Turn about once more, tie up, and groom the near side. You know which the near side is?"

"The left," said Stud, to whom bluff was second nature.

"That's right, because you stand on the left side before mounting. Commence grooming behind the shoulder—see—and finish on the near hind leg, brush out tail, and repeat on the off side. Don't use your comb on mane or tail, and finish with a damp cloth. I'll blow the whistle when you're to feed."

Stud had discovered the day before that the men hated stables, and that it was the proper thing to grouse at them, coupling them always with the most devastating curses one could summon. Inwardly he knew he would not feel that way. He was going to find the sound of leather and the smell of horse most agreeable. Of course he would not let his mouth lag in uttering things that cannot be repeated; he did not wish to be considered queer. But to be with horses, to own one—he could see no hardship in that.

But Bill, on the other hand, knew, even before Sergeant Frisk had got done explaining the proper

toilet, that he was going to hate stables, and that any remarks he might think up would be sincere. Bill did not feel at home with horses. In fact, he could hardly recall having looked at any very closely except when the governor-general was being escorted by some dressy steeds to the opening of Parliament. Bill's eyes were all for cars, and he heartily wished that the none too agreeable animal whose stall he seemed supposed to share for several hours each day was a new roadster. He sympathized with the voice from the next stall as it began to disparage Noah and the day he let horses out of the ark. Sergeant Frisk being out of sight, Bill took the chance of seeing who his neighbor might be and found Ivry, the lean-figured constable, polishing his horse's flanks.

Bill, remembering Ivry, closed his mouth without speaking, but the other said: "I know what you were going to ask. It lasts an hour. That's the answer to your question. This dirty imposition lasts an hour, and only after we've pampered these brutes do we get a bite to eat, ourselves."

Bill, thankful that the crash of yesterday had been apparently forgotten, ventured to tell Ivry what he thought of horses as versus the motor-car.

"And I'll go a step farther," said Ivry, to Bill's astonished delight. "I'll prove to you that not only are horses slower than cars, but the mentality of horsemen is sluggish. The race has been riding since Abraham,—that is to say suffering,—yet did any horseman ever invent the upholstered saddle? No

one, but it was the first thing the motorist thought of. Did you ever—"

"You blighted crab," said a head from the stall beyond, "shut up."

"Why, hello, Murison," said Ivry, twirling a currycomb at the head, which ducked.

But it reappeared to say: "You make me tired. You must like to talk. And where were you and your filthy motor-cycle last winter? Buried. This West is still horse country half the year, and much of it all the year."

"That's what I've got against it," said Ivry. "It doesn't improve."

"It would improve if you went back to Scotland," said Murison, dispassionately. He was a robust, freckled man with auburn hair and white teeth, the intellectual antithesis to Ivry's smooth and disillusioned mind. He meant what he said, and Bill had the feeling that Ivry's words only skirted their meaning. Murison was still deriding Bill's delight, the motor-cycle: "Take my patrol last year. North of Edmonton I used horse. Over by the Liard I used canoe, and north of Fort Smith it was dogs. A motor-cycle in that country is as valuable as a toboggan in hell."

"A reason for staying away until we patrol by plane."

"Yes, I suppose that'll come, and we'll spot our man by television and conduct the trial by radio, but you're going to pile a lot of manure between now and then."

"Cheese it, you fellows," came from a stall farther. "Here's the S. M."

The newcomers found that they had never rightly enjoyed breakfast before, and even the fellows' talk was growing intelligible. Stud sat between Handsome and Murison, with a constable named Adkin opposite. Stud felt a dislike for Adkin, quite aside from his coarse manners and his rudeness. His thin lips and irritable aspect gave him an expression of always being internally dissatisfied and about to voice his dissatisfaction. He had run afoul of Bill the evening before and been called down by Ralstead, the corporal, and at breakfast he recognized Stud as Bill's friend.

"When all these wise guys get through giving you advice," he said, "I've a piece to throw into you, myself. If I was you, I'd cut away from that hunka cheese you came up with."

"Him, you mean?" and Stud nodded down the table toward Bill. "Why should I?"

"I'm telling you for your own good. He's fulla wind, grass-belly. He'll queer you with the bunch."

"He happens to be a friend of mine," said Stud, coolly.

"He'll queer you with the bunch, I say."

"He's never queered me yet. Not with anybody I wanted to know."

Adkin stared at Stud, unable to decide whether he was trying to be fresh or not.

"Suit yourself," he said. "It's your own poison."

Stud applied himself to his food angrily but silently. The food was good. It had been so good at

dinner the day before that Stud had been afraid it was an accident, that the cook was showing off. But supper had risen to the same level, and now breakfast confirmed Stud's hopes. Three times could be no accident.

But would three times a day be enough? The plains' appetite was closing in on a fresh victim. The air was heady enough, but the barracks atmosphere was an exhilaration, affecting Stud like drink. Buoyed by a succession of unusual contacts, he literally expanded, could actually eat more. And not having to pay for his food by the plateful relieved him of the last anxiety. He had not, curiously enough, felt beyond his depth. Possibly because he had long known men and been trained in gaging them. He knew these men before he understood a third they said. Their tones were familiar, and their robust epithets. Bill was not unused to freedom of speech, but he had heard nothing so extremely free as was uttered to left and to right of him with the suavity of platitude. It added luxuriance to living, like fertilizer on a garden.

"Heard you were on the carpet yesterday, Sorley," called Murison. "Get your ticket?"

"I did not."

"What's the matter now?" asked Handsome. "Beer-chasing again?"

"Partly that, but mostly Tappet's bloody bad nature. Just because he's got a brand-new commission he thinks he's too much of a gentleman to soil his hands."

"What'd he do? Take hold of you?" asked Ivry.

"Go choke yourself," said Sorley. "I was coming off fatigue Wednesday when he asked me to spin his stinking flivver for him. I went over and swung the lump of tin around my head for ten minutes and not a gurgle, and me getting hotter and hungrier with every round. Then he has the nerve to tell me my language doesn't suit him. Can you tie that? Well, that touched me off, naturally, and I told him he could take his Lizzie somewhere and gave him the address."

"But he didn't have you up for that?" said Murison.

"No, but he worked off his spite by pulling me up for something he'd forgotten. How's that for gratitude!"

"It strikes me you asked for it," said Stack.

"Not at all," cut in Ivry. "The inspector ought to know by now that Sorley's running this outfit, and not him."

"Don't go by what you hear in this room," Murison cautioned Stud. "They're just letting off steam. Tell me about this Bill friend of yours. Can he play hockey? We're going to try to get up a team here."

Stud told Murison that he was worried lest the boys might not see the gold in Bill beneath the gravel which was decidedly outcropping. Murison advised time, saying that if it was there it would work out into view, and that in smaller matters Bill must engineer his own salvation.

"Things break pretty fair here," he added, "in the long run."

The recruits had been given another searching

medical examination and were now directed to report to the supply store where they would draw the much talked of kit. They discovered that it was divided into a free issue, such as boots, brushes, individual attire, and a loan issue—blankets, mitts, arms, blankets, and all articles that could be returned on leaving the division. Stud carried his new uniform to the tailor shop, feeling that the scarlet serge definitely confirmed his new way of thinking of himself. He was now a Mounted Policeman. He had not believed it when the doctor in Ottawa passed him, and taking his oath later had made small difference. Even to be assigned the horse was not wholly convincing. But now the slow process of cumulative effect hit him with this final stroke. After long gathering of fuel, the match and the fire. He surveyed himself in the glass, and it would have been a less healthy nature than Stud's that was not pleased. The black riding-breeches with the cheeky stripe of canary yellow supported the glorious coat. Boots, hat, shirts, and gloves were the final mark of his new estate, Constable Whaley, R. C. M. P.

"I suppose you can't wait till you are showing yourself to the girls now," said the tailor to Bill.

Constable Seaton had been thinking the same thing. Fortunately, in this difficult and altered world there were still girls. The mere thought of his effect on those at home, could he but exhibit his person corseted in these glove-like garments, brought a glow of pleasure. Company had never been hard for the son of Mr. Seaton to procure, especially after he had his roadster. But in this radiant finery he would

be irresistible, the magnet of society, and he determined to have his picture taken at the earliest possible moment. It was a pity, a reflection on science, that color photography remained so undependable. This plan Bill did not confide to Stud, who, being considerably more advanced than Bill in the lore, also had his thoughts.

That evening Stud was at loose ends, lounging about the library and the canteen, when Murison called to him, "Have you seen yourself in print, Whaley?" and on going over to the bulletin board, Stud discovered an announcement called "General Orders" and read:

Order 4372 The undermentioned have been taken on the strength of the Force, "Depot" Div'n from 7-9-22:
Reg. No. —— Const. Peter Whaley
Reg. No. —— Const. William F. R. Seaton

"That's our gossip sheet," said Murison. "Whenever you're transferred or get extra pay or are fined for breaking one of the hundred and ten commandments, you'll have the same opportunity . . . I won't say thrill . . . of reading your name. Everybody else in the outfit reads it, too, and adds to their knowledge of you. If I was running the show, these pages would tell a lot more. The fellows are pretty well scattered and these G. O.'s are the one tie. It's good for the *esprit de corps.*"

"What's that?" asked Stud.

"Esprit de corps? It's something everybody talks

about and nobody defines. It's this outfit's religion. They won't let you out of here before you're at least tinged with it."

"But tinged with what?"

"A feeling, more than anything else—a feeling that you're a part of the outfit and that anything touching it touches you."

"I see," said Stud.

"You may see, but you can't know; not yet, not until it becomes your second nature. Have a cigarette?"

Stud looked at Murison as he got a light. Here was a superior man, solid in physique and with a quiet matured enthusiasm which betokened an even fire underneath the surface. That evening the barrack-rooms, the library, the entire place had been deserted. By twos and fours the men had vanished. Bill, tired out, had gone to bed. Stud thought himself lucky to have stumbled into Murison, and thrice lucky when they sat down to have a talk. This constable had been north to Aklavik, and though forced to come out, owing to a war wound's making a disturbance, he intended to go back.

"North's the place you want to aim for, Whaley. That's the life. Of course they'll give you a good trying-out first, before they let you go."

"How?"

"Well, when you leave here, you'll go to some divisional headquarters, such as "D" at Winnipeg, or "E" at Vancouver, and be set to doing escort and receiver-general's guards. If you're on your toes they may send you checking up foreigners' naturali-

zation papers or the licenses of stores selling ammunition. Dull work, but not so dull, either, if you're in earnest. And then, if you prove reliable and have a desire for it, they'll try you out on the easy ends of detective work. That's where the excitement begins, if you like that kind of excitement."

"Don't you?"

"That's not my kind. I'm no gum-shoe artist. The North for mine. Of course you'll find dozens of other sorts of work—straight detachment service, or patrolling some of the big Indian reservations, or the border, or the national parks. Your friend Bill, with his motor-cycle fever, might like highway work at Banff or Jasper. But let me tell you a little about my country," and Murison launched out on a eulogy of his favorite passion, to a willing listener, gripping the boy with his stories of the white frontier as other boys in the days of sailing-ships had been gripped by the tales of some not too ancient mariner.

When Murison left him, Stud felt accepted. For an hour he had been talked to as a friend by one of the finest. He now must talk to some one in turn. Digging up a pencil, he poured out the enthusiasm to his closest friend, Laronde:

Parrot, old horse, you're got to pack up and give old Hull the air or I'll come East and deliver a kick in the pants. Honest, Parrot, it's real, and even Bill, who's been rapped at every turn, says so. Now look, kid, we wish you would wake up to yourself and hop a speedwagon and come out. And now I'll spring something. I've just been talking with one of the fellows, a peach of a chap, Parrot, who knows the North like McGregor knows his groceries, from peas to

prunes. Murison's his name and he's put me wise to how you can work it. One of our trumpeters here isn't too good, in fact he's punk, and Murison says you might stand a chance if you were on the grounds, being as the sawbones said you were O K except size. So kid you've got to do it. This noise artist may get popped at any time, and anyway we can get you a job in town to fall back on if there's a hitch, but we don't think there'll be any. It's a great country. Out here a man goes to bed a bum and wakes up rich. So don't act like paper is scarce, kid, but let Bill and me hear that you've tied up with a freight and are on the way.

STUD.

The days began to roll faster and to grow in difficulty. Neither Stud nor Bill claimed lenience successfully now, on the grounds of ignorance. Each hour held its moment of disciplinary sorrow. Every act of theirs burned large holes, apparently, in their instructors' patience.

The touchiest times were inspections.

"Now then, Seaton, if I have to tell you again about keeping your buttons clean, I'll trot you up in front of the O. C. so fast it'll make your head swim. What do you think this is?—some light-headed civilian outfit? Those billiard-ball makers sure waste a lot of time sending to Africa for ivory."

And farther down the line: "Whaley, I thought I told you to get your hair cut. What's that? Didn't have time? Don't answer back, and especially with that moss-grown excuse. You just think you'd like to keep your hair so it would be a better treat for the ladies." And the sergeant-major would pass on, muttering his opinion of men who supposed themselves

pretty or too busy, to the restrained hilarity of the boys' brother bucks.

But in Bill's opinion all other abuses paled, nearly to pleasures, as compared with the riding-school. This was hardship. It was popular to hate the riding, since the healthy must have something to hate and this was the most plausible object. October had brought a chill gray wind which no one but a riding-master could ignore. Stiffness and bruises laid a foundation of discomfort on which was piled novelty of disaster without end. Also, and especially in Bill's opinion, the riding-master was a man who lived on forced jokes and rudeness or in being too ambitious for his men.

And indeed Sergeant-Major Manett impressed recruits in one of two ways, and either way violently. Those unfond of horses considered him a visible impersonation of the devil. His eyes missed nothing, his tongue backed up his eyes, and he had a Cossack's mercy for the lazy or the purposely inept. His own training had been in a heartbreaking school, and his determination was to turn out horsemen as able as himself.

He had, on the other hand, a quick appreciation of honest effort, even by the bunglers, and his fairness was so obvious that the victims of his most stupendous passages forgave him in a week. Horse-lovers supported him against all comers. They saw that his sarcasms were only enthusiasm turned upon the dull, and they became, so far as difference in rank permitted, his friends. Under his practical coaching they ripened swiftly, were a credit on

Photo by Pollard

HORSE DRILL AT CALGARY

parade, grew skilful in the maneuvers of the musical ride, could bring home their mounts, from long patrols, in good condition, earned the compliments of prince and general for their guards of honor; in short, learned horse. They subscribed to Manett's sentiments: "While they call us Mounted Police, this outfit's going to know how to ride."

But if these first weeks spelled pain and ignominy to Bill by day, the nights were hardly less dismal. He began to realize that he did not interest those who, on the higher levels of experience, looked most interesting to him, and he was too exhausted physically to drive himself to amusement. He liked conversation, however foolish, and missed being in the gales of it that swirled about him at meal-time though always excluding him. He wondered what it was in Stud that enabled him to go from group to group without skirmishing. Of the different faces of adversity, he grew to hate the smiling face most. Consequently he was doubly pleased when Handsome, who had held rather aloof since that first day's ragging, came to him one evening after supper and asked in the tones of a seductive equality:

"Things beginning to break your way, yet, Seaton?"

Bill was sport enough to indicate that they were.

"That's good. It's a rotten time, the first few weeks. I was sunk pretty low, I remember. Of course it's a lot worse if one's broke, and I was always that."

Bill agreed that that would make a bad difference.

Handsome laughed, not too easily, adding: "I

never have quite got over the habit. How are you fixed till Saturday? Could you stake me to a five-spot?"

Bill could, easily, and was pleased to. He noticed how exceedingly nice-looking the constable was, and it struck him how hard it must be for such a person not to have what he wanted. He was sorry that Handsome should find it necessary to stop the conversation at this point.

It was only the next day, as they were returning from stables, that Adkin dropped back to Bill's side and asked, ingratiatingly for him, "How do you like herding around with this wild crowd, Bill?"

"All right," said Bill, noticing Adkin's peaked nose with a shade of distaste.

"I never see you going out much. I guess you don't like it."

"Oh, I don't know," said Bill. "It depends on what you mean."

"Well, don't get started till you have to. It's hard on the pay-check. Could you spare me a coupla bones till next week, fellow?"

Bill objected less to lending money than to being called "fellow" by Adkin. He had been glad to oblige Handsome, and when Ivry requested a favor later, Bill looked on it as a privilege. But it was no privilege lending to Adkin, and he increased the loan by five dollars only because he hated to refuse when he had the money. Bill was not so dense as not to tumble to the situation when, within three days, two other constables, whose orbits had not before touched his, veered close enough to borrow and then

swung out into the void again. But it spoke for Bill's progress that he did not take this trouble to Stud.

But Stud knew what was going on. Although letting Bill see to his own salvation, as Murison had advised, Stud was watching, and he was troubled. He knew the boy was easy-going, but he could not believe that Bill would attempt to buy popularity by becoming a money-lender. In barracks there was a scrutiny of motive surpassing anything known in the civilian world. A man was known by his self-respect. Indeed, he wore it on his sleeve, and let the next person be ready to fight if he brushed against it too carelessly. On the other hand, this attitude must never degenerate into a conscious self-approval, at least not openly.

Stud had learned all the gestures of the right attitude, in his street days. He, too, would have divided his money with Handsome, with Ivry, but he would have shared his fist with Adkin, and he was enormously relieved one evening to hear loud voices from the far end of the barrack-room; Bill had at last quarreled with Adkin. Stud had not heard how the argument began and he appeared not to be paying attention now, but he was delighted to hear Bill say, "You borrowed seven, Adkin, and I want it now."

"Do you wanta call me a liar?"

"How much can you give me now?"

"That's better," said Adkin. "Ask papa kindly."

"Come across," said Bill, flushing, "or I'll ask you in a way you can understand."

"Don't threaten, you saphead, or—"

Stud stood up to look, for without a second

thought Bill had launched out at that irritating peaked nose. The nose dodged, and with a combined lunge and poke forward of his foot, Adkin laid Bill heavily on his back, just as Corporal Ralstead entered the room.

"What're you up to, Adkin?" asked Ralstead.

"Just leaving my card on this Jew's face."

"You know well enough where to settle accounts, and it's not here. Go to the gym if you've got to fight, and put on gloves. I hope he trims you."

"That fathead?" sneered Adkin.

"Oh, shut up!" Bill was on his feet.

"Fight! Fight!" sang out somebody at the door and constables from adjoining rooms began to rush in, adding tension to the situation as they were able, and escorting the warring pair over to the gym. Stud, dragging Murison and Ivry from a card-game, followed, arriving to see Handsome helping Bill off with his shirt and advising him of Adkin's weak points, in the spirit of a Roman holiday. Gilred was seconding Adkin. A self-appointed referee clapped his hands, shouting, "Go to it, you fightin' cocks," and the bout started.

The contest was not unfair, for though Adkin was stronger and more accustomed to fist-work and could control his feet, Bill was heavier, an inch taller, and filled with the steam of righteous indignation. Also, he was no longer the youth of easy nurture who had arrived two months before. Adkin's blows were meeting solid flesh, and, luckily for the ring's pleasure, were glancing ones.

"Attaboy! measure 'em off!" shouted one of his supporters.

"Keep your head down, Bill, keep it down!" roared Handsome, laughing.

"Go to it, kid," advised Stack, "dance a bit lighter."

"Attaboy, Adkin! you're getting in."

But not often, for though Adkin drove at Bill, he missed again and again, largely because of Bill's irregular and unexpected antics. Nor did Adkin have a reserve of temper to fall back upon. The gibes from those who understood the situation heated him as directly as Bill's occasional peppering. Once Bill stood firm and he ran into Bill's fist; the laugh brought a flush of oaths from Adkin, and slugging at his enemy with left and right, he reached Bill's nose severely. The first round was declared over.

"Good work, kid! lay him out," said Stud. "You've got friends here betting on you," and for the first time since coming to Regina, Bill was the center of an excited and sympathetic attention. Instructions were showered on him, more bets taken, and the next round opened in a blaze of action. Bill, remembering to carry his hands low, remembering that he had feet, jumped his left to Adkin's jaw. A shout went up—"Great stuff, kid!" . . . "Put him to sleep, Bill!"—while Adkin's friends urged him to demolish Bill at once. The enthusiasm was immense. Newcomers arrived momently, and the noise was fully two thirds in Bill's favor, for Adkin's number was well known.

"What'd I tell you?" shouted Stud to Murison. "Didn't I say he had it?"

First Post sounded, but none heard.

The combatants were not saying anything now. Bill, very red and blowing, one eye partially shut, blood-spattered from his nose, was weakening, fanning the air oftener, brushing Adkin but not bruising him. Adkin, trying to get close for some uppercut he liked, was never quite there. He tried other tactics. Walking back, he feigned a miss, Bill leaned to get him, and Adkin, pulling him off balance, crashed his right into Bill's ribs, his left finding Bill's jaw. Before Bill saw what hit him he was down, sucking in air, tasting salt. He opened an eye and saw Adkin dimly above him, heard a confused roaring of "Get up! Get *up!*" and "seven . . . eight . . . nine . . . ten . . ." The mat heaved as he tried to rise. The circle broke inward. His wind was filtering back and he sat up, to find Stud and Murison by him. Handsome was laughing, Bill could not understand why.

"Good work, kid," Stud was saying. "You stood up to him fine."

From some other quarter a noise of dispute came to his ears. "Fight! Fight!" yelled the fight-thirsty ring-side.

But the door opened, and a heavy specter, wearing three stripes and a crown on his sleeve, looked in and, discreetly unnoticing, advised them that Last Post had blown.

CHAPTER IV

Oats

THE incident did wonders for Bill. He woke to find himself black-eyed and a person nodded to approvingly by the barrack-room community. Matured constables, whom he had not spoken to, approached him, and not to borrow money. He was grossly pleased with himself, and did not show it, sparring off complimentary epithets with more skill than he supposed he had.

But the chief effect was his revolution of feeling toward the place and its regimen. The first gust of romance, killed by a relentless realism, had gone forever; but he began to feel the solid attraction, which alone can kindle the true fire, for these fellow-constables who made much of little and light of so much. Now that he could hold his head up, he saw the purpose for a lot of things he had considered mere annoyance. He even overdid it and was called down for exuberance where he had recently been lectured for slacking.

One frozen morning his horse, yielding to a passing irritation, stopped short, sending Bill on ahead, right into the hospital with a bad shoulder. He utilized this first reprieve from the saddle by writing a letter:

Dear Alec:

Your third letter came in this morning and I was afraid it contained a bomb. But honest, I did write you once before and tore it up. I was feeling pretty low then. Nothing I said or did suited anybody, and if Stud hadn't smoothed out the worst bumps, I don't think I could've stuck it. I was so tired that I couldn't sit down without going to sleep. But they kept me going and I'm on the up-grade, even if my bleating horse did make me bite the dust yesterday. It wasn't much and I'll be out of here, the hospital I mean, in a couple of days. It's supposed to be a sign that God loves you, to get on sick leave. They drive us like a dog after a cat, Alec, but it sure makes the days go.

I know I promised to write about the life here. Do you smell a thick horsy smell on this paper? Well, that says it. We spend hours a day brushing horsehairs onto ourselves and then brushing them off. And that leads up to the main work of the morning, or how to get the best of your horse. I don't believe it can be done. Mine is a practical joker, and has certainly got me sized up. After he puts me where he wants me, he stands by and grins, and walloping him only reacts all same boomerang.

We don't get up now till 6:30, the O. C. having decided it is winter, in which he is right. After stables comes breakfast and 9 o'clock parade and the "fatigues," which are properly named. A man is likely to be asked to do anything, from painting the flag-pole to sweeping chapel. We're going to be the best kind of housekeepers you've ever seen when we get through with here, Alec. Saturday inspection's no joke. It's a wonder they don't make us take up the floors to see if any dust has sifted through.

I never knew there was so much about just policing. After dinner we have lectures on our constable's manual, which is a sort of guide. I'm sending you one to add to your collection of books about criminals. As far as I can see,

the breaks are all with the criminal to-day. Be gentlemanly to him, they tell us, and never take advantage of anything he may say, at least until you've warned him not to say it. Even if he insists that he's a murderer, it isn't good form to take his word for it, you've got to prove it on him.

As soon as we know the law and the statutes, we're to be taught the history of the outfit and first aid and horse ailments and how to camp out. Dad was right about its being an education.

But don't think that they let us sit on our tails all afternoon. The lecture hour's just a teaser. We have no end of drill and they begin by teaching you to salute, which isn't the snap it looks. The advanced fellows are having rifle practice. Murison (he's one of the Northern men and a peach) showed Stud and me how you go about shooting. They strew you on a mat with your left arm entangled in a rifle-strap and the stock eating into your shoulder, the sights propped against your brow, and your eye squinting through a wabbly hole in the end, and then ask you to shoot straight. A man could practise counterfeiting in front of me and be perfectly safe. But that's another thing: one must never think of shooting anybody, at least not first. The movies have got that point right. It's about the only one.

After we bed down the horses we have supper and a little time to call our own. You asked me what kind of fellows there are here and I should say all kinds, the same as in any other bunch of a hundred men. But of course these are all certified husks, nobody undersized, nobody sick, or hardly ever.

We've a good crowd in our barrack-room, though the talk would give the Rev. Dr. Wattam apoplexy, I guess. Stud's quite popular. He goes a lot with an older constable, Murison, and with a wild Englishman who evidently got into some trouble at home, named Dodd, but everybody calls him "Handsome." But he's not a bit vain, and has quite a line.

I see a good deal of a Montreal chap, Victor Trandeau. He knows Parrot's sister. Stud wrote telling Parrot to bum his way out and we'd get him a job, but we haven't heard yet if he's coming.

There's one chap here you'd like, Alec, an Edinburgh man named Ivry, a sarcastic beggar but with a lot of brains. He's keen on the detective end of things, like yourself. You ought to hear him polish off some of the officers—just to us, of course. Most of the fellows do that, though. Murison says it's a way of showing interest. Sometime I'll write you more about the officers and the men in sergeants' mess, but I'm going to tear off a little sleep now.

So long

BILL.

Meanwhile Stud was finding life thrusting through his veins with a force and joyousness such as he had never dreamt of. His powers were compelled into certain channels, often painfully, but his growing self-esteem more than counterbalanced the pain. His boots, which had never shone, now beamed. His buttons glittered. His tunic was spotless. The blemishes of careless living left his face, and, while he tried to bear his pride with some propriety, his walk could not quite conceal the swagger in his soul.

The agonies of physical adjustment diminished, however, and the well-fed young men did not always hold their new exuberance in salutary check. During the first fortnight it had been a miracle in Stud's eyes that men could work all day as they did, then go to town on pass until 1 A.M. But as he found his oats gaining upon him and his pay-check asking to

be squandered, Stud wished that he would be asked to some of the parties. Consequently he was delighted when Handsome asked him one morning if he had anything on, that night.

"I sort of had a date with my best friend," replied Stud, who always felt his way into a new situation.

"Your bed?"

Stud nodded, grinning.

"Oh, rot the bed! You can sleep any time. How'd you like to go to town?"

"Fine," said Stud. "What's doing?"

"As much as you're able."

"Well, I'm not boasting."

"Put in for your pass now."

Stud still hesitated. "You mean to go in civvies?"

"Rather. Leave the serge to babes and sucklings. Make it out for one-thirty. We'll take everything in."

The pass was an impressive bit of paper stating that:

> The bearer, Regt'l No. —— Constable Peter Whaley, has permission to be absent from quarters from 5:15 P.M. of 10/12/22 to 1:30 A.M. of 10/13/22 for the purpose of visiting in Regina, Sask. Mufti. Recommended by Sergeant-Major ——, approved of Post Adjutant —— and the Officer Commanding, Assistant Commr. ——.

As Stud went to the guard-room to procure this signed statement the non-commissioned officer in charge gave him a critical look-over and said:

"If the O. C. saw you with that spot on your coat, Whaley, it'd be nix on the pass. Haven't you learned yet that you've got to look right? Go back and change."

"I haven't any other suit, Sergeant," said Stud, flushing.

"Don't answer back. I don't care a curse what you haven't. It's what you have that's important. Go back and clean that spot off or you don't get this pass."

It was, Stud had thought, a nearly invisible spot, but when he saw Handsome he was glad that he had obliterated it, for the Englishman was spotless, pressed, and incredibly oblivious of his admirable appearance. How could one be so unconscious of a dazzle so deliberately made? Stud could not forget the acute dress-consciousness of his first appearance in uniform in Regina, and though he was not now in uniform, his immaculate state and his almost too attractive companion nearly threw him, as he put it. Handsome laughed and said that it was no time to indulge in complex sentiments.

Very often Stud did not know precisely what Handsome was saying. Stud was not a clever man, nor traveled, nor learned, and Handsome was as novel territory to him as the British House of Commons, where Handsome's father sat. Stud knew instinctively that Handsome was not the solid sort, like Murison, or Stack, or Sergeant-Major Manett, or Sergeant Head of the canteen. He knew that Handsome's brains were no match for Ivry's blazing thrusts, or even Alec's clear, cold thought. But

Handsome was excellent company, new company, and genial, and to talk with him was to Stud something like taking a trip abroad. Stud's roving-itch loved to be scratched by just such contacts. Indeed, one night when Sorley had smuggled some beer into barracks, Handsome and he and Stud had pledged one another to a trip through the South Seas. A one-night trip only.

On the trolley, Handsome and Stud pooled resources and apportioned them among the indulgences contemplated. They decided to patronize, first, a secluded café where Handsome knew the countersign that brought in the ale.

"One thing you learn in the outfit," smiled Handsome as they sat over the ale, "and that's a beastly cheek. A good reason for herding us together so long, I suppose. Take Adkin and Bill, for example. After we've practised cheeking each other for a while, what chance has the poor unpractised bandit got?"

"But I thought bandits practised cheek," said Stud.

"Nothing like us, man. Of course we're all the same to begin with, but we go farther."

This was one of the times when Stud didn't quite follow.

"We are all birds of a feather, though, aren't we Stud? At least under the feathers."

"I wouldn't say that."

"Why not? Kipling did," Handsome emptied another bottle. "He said all women were the same, anyway. Chicken feathers, in that case."

"Maybe so, but some of us didn't fly as far as college."

"Don't let that embitter you, old chap," said Handsome, on rapidly mounting spirits. "What's college? Four hundred a year out of your pater's pockets, four hundred pounds, not dollars."

"How much is that?" asked Stud.

"And here I am, getting paid for the same ride," Handsome went on, ignoring the question.

"I guess you learned a lot of other things," said Stud.

"Rowing, that's all. And I didn't last long at that."

Stud wondered if he would last long at anything.

"Of course I didn't spend all my time valeting a horse. Frightful waste of time, that, Stud. Maybe I'll go back some day and 'stonish them."

Stud wanted to ask him why he had ever come away, but he had learned that one did not put direct questions of this sort. Questions often cut too close to a past that one was trying to forget. Anyway, this was no time for seriousness. The thick steak, the crisp French-fried, the creamy ale, the smokes, the coffee, Handsome's company, all contributed to Stud's well-being. And there was another ingredient —the sense of illicit adventure in that slightly swimming feeling of the head. It was of course bucking discipline. Stud was fiercely glad he had come.

Sauntering out to pick a show, they entered the first theater they came to, its feature being entitled "The Love Stampede," only to discover that the film was founded on a novel of the Mounted Police.

"How vile!" groaned Handsome. "Why didn't we ask somebody! I say, we'll both be sick."

"How's that?"

"There! I'm going to be sick now. See the hero? That puffy-faced corporal. I'll bet you the taxi out to barracks he rescues the villain's daughter. Take me on that?"

"I'll bet she rescues him," said Stud.

"Look! Look! The constable's saluting the sergeant."

"No need to tell the orchestra about it," cautioned Stud.

"See him? Did you see him pass the O. C. without batting an eye?"

"And putty-face is giving out an interview to the reporter," said Stud, who was warming to the new game.

"That's right. That simply couldn't happen. Hooray! What'd I tell you? See the villain's daughter creeping up to neck putty-face? I'll bet you a—"

"Shut down on the noise," said Stud. "You're not taking on the house."

"What the high! Are you trying to wet-nurse me?"

"There's one of the officers. See? Across the aisle. Who is it?"

Handsome steadied to observe. "Inspector Meeker, or I'm mud. They've no right to let officers like him out except on leash."

"He was looking at you," said Stud.

"I don't like this picture," and Handsome rose. "Come on."

Stud followed, reluctantly; he was desirous of seeing the picture through. He liked the game of finding holes in it, and he wanted to win the two dollars from Handsome. Also, since he could not dance, he was not looking for much from the rest of their evening.

They counted their funds under an arc-light and after putting aside the taxi fare, a necessity if they were to have a night of it and still be at barracks in time, they decided that by relying on pick-ups at the dance-hall for company, instead of escorting girl friends already known to Handsome, they could afford more ale. While enjoying this, Handsome told Stud of better days in London when he had blown the girls of the Gaiety to champagne, charging it to his "pater." But Stud was only half interested. His mind was still following "The Love Stampede," and in the midst of Handsome's funniest story Stud blurted out:

"Why don't they do it right?"

"Do what right, you ass?"

"The directors. Why don't they make the picture right?"

"Is that still eating you? The reason is because all the directors were born on a foggy night. As I was saying . . ."

On the way to the dance-hall they passed another movie house whose boards caught Stud's eye, announcing "Nanook of the North."

"Come on," urged Handsome. "Don't tell me you want to see that! I've seen it, anyway, with Murison. He says there's more of the real North in that pic-

ture than in all the books. I'll say so. It's so true it'd freeze you. Come on."

Stud definitely wished he were free of Handsome, who talked too much. He resolved to come and see "Nanook" alone. They turned into a glittering place called "The Happy Hour," and a heated atmosphere, laden with jazz and perfume, smote Stud's senses. With a novel feeling of envy, he watched his companion float away with one of the happy houris in his arms. Stud had watched Bill dance many a night without being envious. He wondered why this difference, but his thought was interrupted by one of the scantily frocked girls.

"You look kind of lonesome," she said. "Don't you dance?"

"You think I look lonesome?" said Stud, waking up. "That's where I fooled you."

"I can see by your face."

"My face never could tell the truth." Stud began to see fun ahead.

"Is that so?" and she looked at him frankly. "I guess you're just shy."

"That's it," said Stud, now highly amused. "You've said it, kid. I'm shy, shy as a dollar bill, seeing you come up."

"Say! Have you got all that much?" She had been created to make boys produce dollar bills and she perfectly understood the business. But the first step was to see if they possessed one. "I don't believe you have, now that I look at you again."

Stud grinned and pulled a greenback half out of his pocket.

"Know what that says?"

She shook her head with intended coyness.

"It says my pal and me are going home in a taxi. See?"

"Say, I guess you're one of the cheap sports."

Stud laughed out loud. It was fun teasing them when they tried their little game on you.

"Is buying a taxi being cheap? Somehow you remind me of my horse, kid—soft in the mouth but hard in the temper."

"Well!" indignantly, "I like your nerve."

"My nerve's all right. A man needs it—with horses."

"Say!"

Stud detected the first sign of genuine feeling in that "say" and as she turned away he seized her by the wrist. She pulled, but he held her without effort, laughing to feel her small effort helpless against his unexerted strength.

"Can you teach me to dance in one night, kiddo?" he asked.

"I don't know as I want to."

"Well, I'll make up your mind for you. You want to, all right. But can you? If you can, I'll make my pal walk home."

"Will you do as I say?"

"You bet. I won't even spit sideways."

So he bought his tickets and she took him into a corner.

He and Handsome walked back to barracks.

Everything else having gone so well, it was deeply

unfortunate that the night guard should have surprised them at the very last.

"Consider yourselves under open arrest," he said and sent them to bed.

Stud undressed in the darkness, tossed by a tumult of newly uncovered feelings. "Open arrest!" And what followed? Would they let him out? Was he to lose membership in the outfit?—to part from Murison? to see Bill go smoothly on while he dropped back into a purposeless life? He swore passionately to himself. For suddenly all the appeal of the life rolled in on him, gripped him. It was his life, the only satisfactory life he had ever had. And the plans! He swore. And what would Alec think? He swore again. But swearing did not put down the panic in his weary head. He controlled himself for a moment, promising himself that if he scraped through this he would be very very careful. Then he dropped into a troubled sleep, for it was almost morning.

CHAPTER V

Pains of Growth

THE hours between waking and Orderly Room at ten o'clock were the most miserable that Stud had yet lived. He was to have a trial, he had been told. The word alarmed him, bringing to mind his newsboy days of head-lines, murders, jail terms. If his superiors regarded staying in town so seriously, what would they do to one for something really disgraceful?

It was almost worth the misery, however, to find the big men so friendly. Corporal Ralstead, whose calm, almost fortress-like nature had drawn Stud, relieved the boy's mind by explaining that the trial was a matter of form, to give him experience against the time when he would be bringing prisoners up, himself. Murison took him aside and coached him on the ordeal ahead; and while Sorley and others kidded him, Stud knew that this was their way of bucking him up. But the unique result of the situation was to bring Alan Ivry out of his shell. He walked over to "B" block with Stud just before ten.

"You'll find 'Whacker' Knight absolutely just," he said.

"That's something," replied Stud.

"It's everything. He likes the old Police way—

bluff. If the skies fall, don't lift an eyebrow; that's form. If it did any good to quote Scripture, I'd say, 'Beware the second offense.' See you later."

That was all from Ivry, but Stud felt better. Stud could not look at this lean, polished rolling stone of a constable without being impressed by the conviction that no matter how often one guessed at his nature or his past, one would never guess right. Stud was by nature direct, Ivry oblique. Yet the indirect advice he had just given, glancingly and not at all like advice, stayed with Stud. He resolved to hide his nervousness. He recalled another remark of Ivry's: "If one hasn't the nerve, the appearance does just as well; few can detect a substitute."

So, when he was paraded before his local Majesty the Assistant Commissioner, without spurs and with the avenging sergeant-major holding his hat, Stud stood unshaken in aspect, although his palms were moist. The great officer looked sterner than Stud remembered, but his eyes were not inhuman. A man with those eyes would be just, as Ivry had said. Could one ask more of a judge than that? Stud held himself to an admirable rigidity as the officer inquired the offense.

The sergeant-major read the charge: "In that to the prejudice of good order and discipline, Regimental Number —— Constable Peter Whaley, 'Depot' Division, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, did absent himself from barracks after the expiration of his pass . . ." and so forth, combining the language of the Magna Charta with more ominous terms of present moment. Stud found that he had

broken more rules than he knew existed. The N. C. O.'s tones were the tones of an executioner, and Stud, realizing the heavy color of his offense, began to wonder if he and Handsome would be kicked out of their Eden. He heard the officer ask what evidence was offered, whereupon the avenger called on Corporal Frees, the N. C. O. of the night guard, to substantiate the charge.

"Constable Whaley, have you anything to say?"

Stud wished avidly to comment on this manufacturing of mountains out of mole-hills; he longed to advance his good intentions. But, remembering Murison, he contented himself with a respectful, "No, sir."

His eyes fell to the assistant commissioner's long and aristocratic hands. He fancied that his fate was almost visibly held in them as the officer said:

"Constable Whaley, you will recall that when you were in this room once before I counseled you to put discipline first and to avoid this sort of thing. Yet this act of yours as much as says that you hold discipline in contempt, that you will do as you please when it pleases you. It says, further, that your judgment is poor. For if you think that you can disregard orders at will, either you have not waked up to what this depot is for, or else you have not the ability to realize it and are of no use to the Force.

"You may think this is not a serious offense. But I will not tolerate infringements of discipline of any kind at this post. Unless a man proves himself trustworthy, reliable in temptation, or danger, or monotony, he cannot continue to wear our uniform."

The officer rose, and for a terrible half-second Stud had the sickening apprehension that he had been dismissed from the service, but the straight gray-haired man before him was continuing:

"This is your first offense, and I am prepared to believe that you did not realize its seriousness. If it had occurred in the field, I should have had to recommend you for dismissal, but while I do not propose to turn these barracks into a reform school, yet your record shows that you are not one of the recruits whose main idea is that putting it over their superiors is a clever thing to do. From your record so far I believe that you have the ability and the desire to become a good Mounted Policeman. You have shown good zeal and aptitude. Therefore I shall sentence you to confinement in barracks for two weeks and a fine of ten dollars."

Stud's feelings bore him along from the assistant commissioner's room on a swift current of thankfulness. Those words of portent, "I should have to recommend you for dismissal," sounded in his mind, and he knew that the gray colonel's dispassionate tones were sincere. Dismissal! That danger he proposed to skirt widely. "Not a chance, kid, not a chance," he said aloud, and canceled in his mind a date with the dance-hall girl, thinking other things which would undoubtedly have distressed her. Handsome, he learned in a few minutes, had been given C. B. for a month and a twenty-five-dollar fine.

But an antidote was prepared to nullify the poisonous worries of the morning. Stud, on reaching the

canteen, was told that somebody was waiting up in the barrack-room to see him. As he took the steps at his usual three to the stride he wondered who it could be. It was Parrot.

The meeting was affectionate in the way of men, with hoarse laughs on Stud's part, the rebound of unholy epithets, and a very genuine gladness. Both boys had that essential to cheerful living, sanity, the quality on which all other qualities are best founded; both overflowed with human nature, that not too common possession. In Stud it took the form of a robust wholesomeness, in Parrot of an almost cockney liking for the streets and their attractions. He was subdued now, first by the long trip alone, for he had ridden in a box-car and had almost frozen, and secondly by his deep delight in being once more with Stud.

Parrot's surface was smooth. He could lie and deceive with the unconcern of art. But beneath his mask the boy nursed an incorruptible loyalty to Stud. He had dared this long trip, against parental wishes, because Stud had wished it, because the older boy, being a rover, had made roving attractive. No sentimentality had ever been exchanged between the two. By acts alone did Parrot make Stud aware that he, and not Mr. Laronde, was the person in the world whom Parrot revered. To give Stud credit, he lived up to his responsibility as he saw it, also quite without words on the subject.

"Bill will be up in a minute," Stud told Parrot, and presently he was introducing him to the man indirectly responsible for Parrot's presence:

"Meet the kid, Murison. This is the skinny frog I told you about. What do you think he's done? Skipped out, grabbed a freight, and found his way to his new home. That's the right stuff, isn't it? . . . Only, kid, you're going to settle down and learn some discipline. . . . Isn't he, Murison?"

"I haven't done a thing you told me not to," said Parrot, quietly.

"Well, you're not going to do a lot more. No beer, no broads, nothing. Isn't that right, Murison, until he weighs more? There's mess sounding now. Think you could blow a tin whistle like that, kid? Come along, wash up now, and we'll fill you full of the best chow you ever ate, and then you're going to hang around with Randerson. He's the good trumpeter. . . . Can't he, Murison?"

"That ought to be all right, for to-day. And I've a friend in town who's promised me a bed for him."

"That's the way it is here, kid," said Stud later. "They'll either do everything for you or nothing. You want to watch your step at first; put your foot down real careful. When did you see Alec?"

"Didn't Alec write? He's gone to Detroit."

"Detroit? What for?"

"He wouldn't say."

"That's like him. Trust Alec for going straight to what he wants and talking later."

Stud hunted up Constable Trandeau, French Canadian, knowing that he and Parrot would start out having their race in common, while Stud attended his afternoon lecture on the history of the Force.

It had been news to Stud that the outfit had so much history. It was better news that these annals on which he had to take notes were not merely historical, for Stud had small taste for reading and even less for study. Only the solemn fact that otherwise he would never see service in uniform had induced application to any lecturing. From the first he had dreaded the day's darkest hour, the hour in the class-room, especially when it had been devoted to learning the constable's manual. Stud despaired of knowing the difference between a summary offense and an indictable; he remained hazy on the proceedings of a preliminary hearing. Bill and Murison and even Ivry would take Stud in hand before the tests, hounding him with uncomfortable questions, until he hated them but knew the purport of the work.

"Now, Stud," Murison would say, "you're in charge of a guard-room and a prisoner is brought in. What matters do you look to?" Or, "What is an accomplice after the fact?" Or, "Tell me, you son of all the apes, what should an information contain?" Or, "Can an arrest be made on Sunday?" with an occasional, "Here's one you ought to take an interest in: how's a furlough obtained?" until enough of the essentials had lodged in Stud's head to give him five or ten per cent beyond the sixty per cent required.

With the history, affairs had bettered. There were more stories than dates, and Inspector Tappet showed how the early days of the Force had made possible all the later days of western Canada. Stud

listened, amazed, and he felt a stirring of pride that men in the same uniform had done all this. He thought Ivry almost wicked when he said to Handsome, as they left class:

"What's the good of it all? What's the use of such a history, if nobody will use it?—if nobody pays any attention to it?"

"Everybody paid attention," said Handsome.

"I don't mean ourselves. I mean the taxpayer, the poor idiot on whom all politicians feed."

"What are you crabbing at now?" asked Stack.

"Nothing you can understand," said Ivry, calmly.

"Spit it out," said Handsome. "You want to, anyway."

"Well, take the taxpayers of this province," said Ivry. "We created the province for them, didn't we? Made it safe for them, threw the fear of the law into the criminals. What happens? The province gets rich, gets proud, decides to create some police of their own, at a little additional cost of three or four hundred thousand dollars a year. They do so. They take the criminal work from us, the work we excelled in, the only interesting work, and charge up the additional expense to local pride. The taxpayers, half of them born because the Mounted Police made it safe to be born here, forget the history, swallow the additional charge, and stand by while we are shown the gate. If our past is mentioned they all wave the flag and yell like a lot of Chinese practising ancestor worship. But if the present is mentioned, the past is instantly forgotten, because it's convenient to forget. But our past will have its revenge."

"How's that?" asked Stud.

"Some bright man will remember that we're three hundred thousand dollars cheaper. The whole West will see that brilliant light some day."

"Is that why you joined up?" asked Sergeant Head, laughing incredulously. He had watched politics for thirty years.

"No. But it's the reason why I'm going to stick."

"You'll have a long wait."

Ivry did not bother to reply. Ivry, Constable Alan Ivry from Edinburgh, the great consumer of cigarettes and Bernard Shaw, was as far above the average recruit intellectually as Alec, say, above Stud. He had matured swiftly in the war years, and was now only twenty-four. The war had hit his sensitive nature very hard, twisting his perceptions as a tree is twisted by growth in an exposed spot. The ordinary easiness of young human nature had been wrung out of him. Outwardly he was the arch-ridiculer, making the established ways of the Force his especial target. Inwardly he grasped at it as the desperate grasp a saving hand.

To Ivry the Force stood for security. His nature demanded sincerity; he found it in the Force. The duty at which he aimed in the detective branch appealed to him, giving him far greater fields in which to exercise his wits and his self-command than the regular service. His sharp tongue had an ally in an inconvenient memory. He hated muddling, he hated hypocrisy, and he was exasperated by the slow, unimaginative methods of the legal profession. Murison asked him once why he was training for the out-

fit rather than for the law. "Anybody can obstruct justice," he had answered instantly.

Naturally, he was not popular. He would not have been understood if he had bothered to explain himself. His note-book would have shocked a soldier. "Why don't they teach thinking?" he wrote at the end of a lecture course, and again, "What these sheep need is a course in insubordination." Yet he was not anarchistic; all he worked for was an intelligent order in things, and he reserved his bleakest adjectives for the dupes of the communists who had tried to establish the soviet in Canada in 1919.

But to the old-timer who worshiped the outworn because it had been used Ivry could be caustic, too. Sergeant Head, who ran the canteen, was his especial prey in this respect. Head had not been promoted as he thought was his due and as the seniority list prescribed. A much abler man had gone up, and Head, who for that reason did not approve of the new commissioner, allowed this fancied wrong to color all his estimates of recent innovations.

"What's wrong with a seniority list?" he asked angrily of Ivry after one of the latter's gibes.

"Nothing, Sarge, if you're hunting for the ideal way of defeating common sense."

"What do you mean . . . common sense?"

"It does you credit to inquire, Sarge," said Ivry.

"Well, what is it, then, if you're the only one that knows?"

"I agree with you that the seniority list must be in existence, Sarge, as an excuse when a good senior

officer is to be pushed. But when a good junior officer deserves pushing, then it is common sense to forget the list, isn't it?"

"You young bucks amuse me, you do," said Head. "It's a wonder the outfit got along before you came."

"Ivry doesn't think we did," said Stack.

"You mistake me, as usual, Stack," said Ivry. "I was merely pointing out how the rate of deterioration, which Head's always bulling about, can be maintained. If Superintendent Methusaleh happens to have the longest beard in this outfit, then of course he has the right to run something he knows nothing about."

"His loose talk's a menace to dis*cip*line," confided Head to Stack. "And speaking of that, have you heard the big shakes this new broom of a commissioner is going to in-sty-tute? You fellows are going to work, you are. Four months' training in foot and arm drill, e-quy-tation and cavalry drill, rules and regulations, first aid, history, and constable's manual. Then two months in musketry and revolver-shooting, Criminal Code, and Federal Acts. I guess that'll keep you hopping, eh?"

It was shortly after the history examination that Stud was in the canteen one night when a member of the Originals dropped in, a Major Bagley, one of the first three hundred who in 1874 had marched through seas of savages from Manitoba to the Rocky Mountains, doubling the size of the Dominion at a blow. The sight of him, hearty and with no sense of self-importance, struck Stud as amazing

after half a century of pioneering, and the fact that all western Canada's history was standing before them in the flesh was incredible.

"Tell them about the old days, Fred," said Sergeant Head, and through an entire evening Stud listened to intimate talk of the first young Commissioner French, who had really created the Force, and of Commissioner Macleod, who had laid down the unique policy of telling the Indians the truth and then doing what he said he would do. Stud heard how Sitting Bull came to eat from the Force's hand, and of how the Canadian Pacific Railway became a reality.

Then the story swung into the North, with Constantine laying the foundations of law and order in the Yukon, and Commissioner Herchmer, greater and more dreaded than any yet, planting detachments, sanctuaries of safety and justice, about the empty wilderness, and, by his tenacity and will, creating fame from common men. Stud felt the excitement personally and wished that Alec could hear the tales of detective work that ensued, when Superintendent Primrose started to encourage volunteers, Pennycuick and Hetherington and their successors.

The major stopped there, but Ivry said: "And without the detectives, who could have convinced the authorities, three years ago, that events were shaping up for a major revolution? No one in Canada. It wouldn't have been believed possible. Yet our men proved it. By mere luck we've had the talent in our ranks. But luck is scarcely enough for a nation to rely on, is it?"

"You've the improvements already laid out, I suppose," said Head, sarcastically.

"Yes," said Ivry, undisturbed, "the improvement. Let us have full detective training and this Dominion will be the most—"

"Go to it! go to it!" shouted Head. "But God save us if you get to be commissioner."

"You'll need more protection than that," Ivry replied dryly.

CHAPTER VI

Extracts from G. O.'s

General Orders issued by the Commissioner, for the week ending January 7, 1923:

No. 368

The following cablegram was sent to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, K.G., etc. etc. etc., Honorary Commandant of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and is published for general information:

"The Royal Canadian Mounted Police present their humble duty to your Royal Highness and respectfully offer their best wishes for Christmas and the New Year."

In reply to the above the following has been received:

"Happy New Year to you and all ranks."

No. 4879

The following transfers to date on 1-1-23:

Reg. No. —— Corpl. Ralstead, S. J., from "Depot" to "N" Div'n.

Reg. No. —— Const. Stack, V. R., from "Depot" to "O" Div'n.

No. 4880

The undermentioned horse, having been purchased at Winnipeg on 3-1-23, is taken on the

strength of the Force on that date and posted to "D" Div'n:
Remount No. Reg. 1479. Purchased from T. V. Zett.

No. 4881

Extension of furlough, without pay, is granted the undermentioned:
Reg. No. —— Const. David, Dubois, of "F" Div'n from reveille 8-1-23 to midnight 15-1-23.

No. 4882

The undermentioned, having been engaged as trumpeter, is taken on the strength of the Force and posted to "Depot" Div'n. He will take Reg. No. ——.
Reg. No. —— Laronde, Perrot, Regina, 7-1-23.

CHAPTER VII

Canteen Nights

CHRISTMAS passed with the officers looking the other way, the hockey season reached a peak and waned, curling stopped, the horses' hairs began to come out in even greater quantities, spring gave signs of opening in a carnival of mud.

Many new men had arrived during the winter, and many a finished recruit had taken train for the four quarters of the Dominion. Stud and Bill realized that their time was drawing near, and they were ready. Stud could ride well. Bill's success was not so unconscious, but he could manage his mount creditably. Both shot passably with both rifle and revolver, and they knew much police work in theory.

Stud felt that he could leave contentedly now, for Parrot was making a niche for himself. There had been one perilous week when the youngster, worn by the fagging novelty and incessant strain, and taking a hopeless view of life and the hereafter, had called a sergeant the offspring of a dog. It was a heinous crime and had sent him swiftly to the guard-room, but the matter was smoothed over by the most delicate flattery on the part of several of Stud's friends, and the trumpeter was saved. After this crisis the boy throve. Alec, much struck by his

initiative in going West, began a correspondence with him which helped the expanding character at a lively period. Alec himself was being helped to secret-service insights by an uncle in Detroit.

During the unqualified disaster of spring's coming, the men stuck close by the barracks and had occasion to thank Heaven for the canteen. This place was to the barracks what the hearth is to a living-room. It was more than a store, although originally intended to supply the men with the accessories of civilization at cost, for it supplied a little gossip with each package. Men coming in from drill or stables, from fatigues or rides or guards leaned across the counter for some articles of luxury and left the latest word with their money. Sergeant Head, filing the information in his mind, distributed it to taste.

Ivry said that he would not object to the sergeant's telling everything he knew, if he would only stop there, but this diffusion of news was a boon to all ranks. It spun relationships, like a web, of admiration or of laughter. Men of all ranks sank their degrees in the canteen. Night after night, youths like Teamer and Sorley and Bill, not much tainted with a sense of responsibility, would gather and listen to their elder and wiser fellows. Real wisdom has always been handed down so, but not always with such a tang of comment or in so dense a streaming of tobacco.

One night in early April, Staff-Sergeant Sellers, en route from Lethbridge, had stopped off to visit Sergeant Frees, and, drifting down to the canteen,

had fallen in with Sergeant Head, who was conducting a losing fight with Ivry, Murison, and Deacon on the subject of the old-timer.

"I agree with you," said Ivry to Head. "One mustn't confuse the two species. There are the genuine old-timers, the real men who gave the scarlet its prestige and who made it easy for us to do our work. We could name scores of them, and there's one infallible way of telling them. They're still loyal. They have the wit to see that we are doing a necessary work which is as important in its way as theirs was. They have their own old times to talk about, of course, but they don't talk very loud, at that. They were too good Policemen to get the habit. They leave the screeching to the whoopers and howlers—"

"The whoopers, did you say?" interrupted Sellers, smiling.

"Yes, the lumps of conceit who did nothing much and have to make up for it by solemnly shooting off their mouths about it. They imagine that the outfit went automatically to pieces on their leaving it."

"Oh, come!" said Head. "There aren't very many like that."

"One's too many," said Ivry, "because the mischief spreads among those who don't know. They pretend that we don't exist or aren't the same outfit or that we're a set of lazy dogs trading on their good name. It's half their fault that the tourists from the States ask such fool questions. . . . Deacon, tell your story over again."

Constable Deacon removed his pipe. "I was com-

ing back from Waterton Lakes last fall, in mufti, and at one of the stations a chap from Chicago beckoned me away from Constable Huzman, who was wearing his serge, and asked me who that bird in red was. I told him that Huzman was a member of the R. C. M. P., and do you know that solemn ass wouldn't believe me? He said he was from Missouri and couldn't be kidded that easy, as he knew the Mounted Police had been disbanded. He said he'd got it from an old-timer. Can you raise that? And a thousand of us drawing rations."

"And earning our two dollars a day," said Murison.

"Yes, but try to tell that to Dorrit, say," was Ivry's comment.

"Who's Dorrit?" asked Sellers.

"Don't you know Dorrit, Staff?" asked Ivry. "Don't tell him so or you'll break his heart. He's an old-timer of the sort that gets my goat, an ex-hero who pulled an Indian out of his tepee in eighteen-ninety, and who secretly regards it as the culminating achievement of Canadian history. He was hanging around here this afternoon."

"He's still here," said Stud, "if it's the ex-corporal you mean."

"Let's get him in to talk," said Murison.

In ten minutes the older man was the center of a polite if cynical circle, smoking their tobacco.

"Now, Corporal," said Murison, "how about telling us the story of your days in the outfit?"

"Mr. Dorrit may not like to talk about himself," said Ivry, without change of countenance.

"Give him a chance," snapped Head. "Where did you put in your time, Corp?"

"Everywhere I was sent," said Dorrit, looking about his small audience beamingly. "Mostly among the Indians. Did you boys ever hear about the ugly time I had when old Beef-Walking thought he'd put the wind up me by pointing his rifle at me?"

"That's what we want to be told," said Murison, who knew it well enough to prompt.

So the ex-corporal recreated the incident on the established lines—the malicious threats of the redskin, the background of fermenting savages, the moment of peril when Dorrit rode into the camp, his upturning of their liquor, his strategy of coming back next day when they all had less heart and more head, to conclude the arrests, the final satisfaction of justice.

"Yes, that's the way we did things in those days," he concluded. "We never let the redskins think they could run things, not for a minute."

"Very properly," said Sellers. "They haven't the ability."

"I guess there's nothing like that now, is there?" asserted Dorrit.

"No," whispered Deacon to Ivry. "We usually do what we set out to do, on the first trip."

"Ssh!" Head was annoyed.

"I wonder," Sellers was saying, "if Indians aren't much the same, always, especially when drunk."

"You've sized them up," said Dorrit. "They were just as bad in 'ninety, when I took old Beef-Walking, as they were in 'seventy-five, although the 'seventy-

five boys won't admit it. An Indian don't change. He may say he do, but he don't."

"That's just what I thought," pursued Sellers. "A little thing happened this summer, sir, which you mayn't have heard about, because it happened in the East. Some bootleggers smuggled bad whisky to a large family of Indians on a reservation in Ontario. About midnight Corporal Teasdale heard of the racket, walked into a roomful of Indians, including some powerful bucks who were temporarily dangerous, secured the evidence, and upset their plans, just as you did, Mr. Dorrit, made arrests and bundled them into his car, single-handed and without pulling a gun. Not bad, eh?"

Their visitor emitted a puff of smoke. "We didn't have cars to help us," he said. "We slung a leg over the saddle, rain or snow. Those were the days of real patrols."

"How far did you have to patrol?" asked Stud, quite sincerely.

"Oh, sometimes for days and days."

"A thousand miles?"

Mr. Dorrit rather heavily dismissed Stud's attempt to be jocose, but Stud insisted that he was serious. Murison came to the rescue.

"But you often had to do several hundred miles, didn't you, Corporal? I was under that impression."

"On the border, maybe. The boys at Wood Mountain patrolled east to the Willow Bunch crowd, about a hundred miles, and going west they met up with the patrol from Estevan. But that wouldn't be a hundred."

Courtesy of Canadian Pacific Railway

PINCHED!

"But surely," said Murison, "they must've gone farther than that! Why, to-day, in the Arctic, we make patrols of six hundred, nine hundred, even twelve hundred miles."

"I'd got the same idea," said Ivry to Dorrit. "I certainly thought that you put it all over our boys to-day in distance and danger and endurance."

"So we did, so we did," said the irritated old-timer. "Haven't I said there were no automobiles, no motor-cycles to give us a lift, nothing—"

". . . but the C. P. R.," said Deacon. "I suppose you took that if it was going your way."

"We weren't fools."

"We use motors for the same reason," said Sellers. "But there are vast areas yet where gas is out of the question. I'm amazed, however, at what you admit about the old days."

"He doesn't admit it," said Ivry, poisonously.

"You're not fair, fellows," said Murison. "You're forgetting the greatest patrols ever made: the Peace-Yukon, the opening up of the Mackenzie, the early days at Churchill and Chesterfield, the Dawson-McPherson patrol."

"You're getting into modern times, though," said Sellers. "I was a buck the year Fitzgerald died."

"Let him come on to the present," said Ivry, and he waved a thin blue pamphlet in Dorrit's direction. "Why not break the news to our guest of what's in the official report for last year?—for I imagine he hasn't looked into it. You, Murison, say that we aren't fair. But, I ask you, is there really any falling off in danger, in the disagreeableness of the frontier,

even if the frontier is located in a different place? Aren't our men just as likely to be shot by the loonies they are arresting in the new northwest territories as they were in the old? Was the prairie weather any worse than the climate of Baffin Island? And in addition don't we have dozens of problems and predicaments that were totally unknown to the old days? Except for the dangers from Indians at the very first, I'll bet I can match you job for job, in that blue book, and quote you brave deed for brave deed. Mr. Dorrit, what's the bravest thing you know of in your time?"

The old-timer looked modestly down his nose. "That's not for me to say," he replied.

Ivry made a gesture of resignation, then, leaning over to Deacon, he whispered, "These soup-heads don't even *want* to know what's going on."

"Wipe up the floor with him, Corp," said Sergeant Head to Dorrit, "and tell them what you told me—that times ain't what they used to be, and you'd be ashamed to belong to this bunch of loafers."

"No," said the old-timer, "it's not worth while arguing. Their minds is made up. But I'll say this: If a man thinks he's doing Mounted Police work when he's gum-shoeing around after dope-smugglers, or patrolling pretty parks, or even riding around the North Pole on a dog-sled, then he thinks it and no words of mine will change him. Why, you fellows don't even have the criminal work now."

"Except in three fifths of the country," corrected Sellers.

"Three fifths? How do you get that?"

"We are responsible for all police work, criminal and Federal, in the Yukon, the North West Territories, and the national parks."

"Well, you don't have as many murders as we did."

"I'll admit that," said Sellers. "But we haven't learned how to prevent quite all. The gentle Eskimos have almost stopped killing girl babies since we took over the North, but they've done in several whites recently."

"Mostly missionaries, though," murmured Ivry.

"Well, I must be going," said Dorrit as the trumpeter blew First Post.

"It was good of you to come in and talk to us," said Murison.

"Not at all, not at all," said the veteran, increasingly beaming as the boys' polite good-bys flattered him with youth's attentions. "If you had the criminal work, now, you'd do it well enough, I dare say. What I hold is that when they destroyed the Force they should have destroyed its name. Good night, good night."

"The triple ass!" exclaimed Ivry, when he had gone. "When we are given back the criminal work, may I be near to see him go sick. How long do you think it will be, Staff?"

"Five years; maybe three; maybe seven. As soon as the people of these provinces discover that they're spending half a million more a year than is necessary. When that happens, things'll move fast."

"I hope you don't overrate the peepul," said Ivry. "Don't you, Stud?"

But Stud did not hear him. During this conversation he had been aroused as never before. And now he had just mentally put in his application for the North.

CHAPTER VIII

Extracts from G. O.'s

No. 5252

The following transfers to date on 1-5-23:

Reg. No. —— Const. Whaley, P., from "Depot" to "G" Div'n.

Reg. No. —— Const. Seaton, W. F. R., from "Depot" to "K" Div'n.

No. 5253

Const. Adkin, V., of "Depot" Div'n recommended to be dismissed from the Force for disgraceful conduct in that he did make a false statement in writing by stating that he was "single," well knowing same to be false.

The Commissioner approves the above recommendation.

No. 5254

The undermentioned, having been returned to duty, ceases to draw extra pay:

Reg. No. —— Const. Kettleson, D. Y., of "B" Div'n, from mess waiter at Dawson, on 25-4-23.

No. 5255

Trumpeter Laronde, P., sentenced to be confined to barracks for 21 days for disgraceful conduct in

that he did create a disturbance near the Happy Hour Dancing Pavilion by argument with civilians.

No. 5256

The following transfer to date on 15-5-23:

Reg. No. —— Const. Murison, W. L., from "Depot" to Ft. Smith, N. W. T.

CHAPTER IX

Policing the Trains

It was August, a year after the boys' momentous decision to join up, and nine months since Parrot had run away from home, that the trumpeter found himself, most unexpectedly, once more in the familiar Union Station of Ottawa. But with what a difference! Now the boy was conspicuous in regulation uniform, with side-arms. For he had been detailed, in a shortage of constables, to act as one of the two guards on a harvesters' excursion train, under Ivry.

The time was midnight, and Parrot walked slowly about among the groups of harvesters congesting every space, waiting for the minute when his heavy responsibility should begin. He felt like a turkey-cock as it struts stiff-legged around its tamer-colored charges. And as he studied the hundreds of swart and stolid men, the knots of lively, irresponsible younger ones, Parrot felt a very small turkey indeed. Had he not been one of them himself, once? He knew well how thoughtlessly and cruelly a crowd on holiday could joke, or bait and defy authority if authority irked, and Ivry had said there would be more than a thousand harvesters on this train. Parrot was excusably nervous, for this was his début into service.

It was also the inauguration of a new and difficult service by the Mounted Police. Each summer the wheat-growing West had called for more helpers from the East, and each summer, as the trains grew longer and more numerous, the damage caused by their lively passages had increased. Rough jokes, as of stones against window glass, became small riots. Café-keepers who had charged triple prices successfully for a few trips, suddenly found that one looting ate up all profits, and thenceforth boarded up their shops. The slow trains, dragging through three hundred miles of August desert, finally bore gunplay and arson in their bellies, until a murder followed on scenes too shocking to get into the papers, and the desperate railways called for assistance from the one force with country-wide jurisdiction.

The commissioner found it an awkward time to spare thirty men. The Indian treaty payments were in full swing; the national parks, filled with an unprecedented stream of tourists, called for more patrols; new detachments had just been opened in the North, and criminal investigation involved perpetually greater numbers, as did the other governmental departments which needed police assistance. So the commissioner instructed his superintendents, the officers commanding divisions, to bring in the odd man from the sub-districts and detachments where he could possibly be spared, and the Depot was combed for men who would not let the Force down. Parrot had been deemed one of these, and had come East in glory, leaving his trumpet behind him.

It was better than cashing pay-checks, the boy felt, not to have some hoarse-voiced sergeant croaking: "You blew First Post two minutes late last night, Laronde. If you don't snap out of this lazy stupor, you and I are going to disagree."

Parrot had learned his lesson, of course, and never referred now to the sergeant's fancied pedigree. Regina not only had taught him lessons, but had given him height and weight, a set of trained muscles and Mounted Police instincts. Unfortunately for Parrot's peace of mind, he was more man at heart than in countenance. It made him hopelessly sick to look into the mirror and see still that smooth boyish face. He had never been an angel; why must he look like one? He combed his hair more viciously at the question. But he need not have worried. Angels never owned eyes like his.

As soon as the men in barracks discovered that this slim trumpeter did not take advantage of their recognition (a caution dropped by Stud) they had expanded. One man after another first tolerated Parrot's presence, then tutored him, then made him feel a friend. Stud and Murison maintained a jealous vigilance, without Parrot's being aware, lest he ruin everything by becoming the spoiled darling of the place. But he escaped that horror, partly by his street-days' experience and chiefly through his desire to be approved. His idea of torment, hell, and purgatory was the fear of not making good in these men's eyes. So to be ordered out on duty with them was unlooked-for heaven.

The trip East had been one long junket, within

discipline, marred only by heat and tourists who insisted upon breaking into the men's airings at the station stops with endless and usually silly questions. At Fort William, Parrot had been careless and had got cornered alone by two women who said that the sight of him in that pretty uniform made them catch their breath. Parrot wished it had smothered them. He felt his ears point back.

"Mercy!" said one of the dames; "but it must have been an important murder to require so many of you!"

"Yes ma'am," said Parrot.

"But, Mounty, I thought you always got your man alone."

"Yes ma'am, but this was a woman." Parrot caught sight of Sergeant Head passing, and gave the high sign. The sergeant caught on, came over, and gruffly ordered Parrot to the rear.

These inconveniences scarcely riffled the current of merriment, and not until he was paraded before the officer commanding "N" Division at Ottawa, with Head and Ivry and Handsome and the others, did Parrot realize that serious matters neared.

"At each stopping-place," the inspector was saying, "you will see that law and order are maintained. All the damage and disorder of previous years must be prevented. You have full jurisdiction, by consent of the attorney-general in each province, to enforce all laws. It devolves upon you men to start this service off on the right foot. The main point to bear in mind is that each situation, as it arises, must be met with tact and also with firmness. In the East

here we have still our reputation to create, and this effort will be widely watched."

Parrot had been glad to be assigned to Ivry's train, and a little anxious, too. Parrot held Ivry in awe. To satisfy Ivry, he felt, would be high praise; he could not conceive of Ivry's praising him. Ivry's lips curled far oftener than they commended, and he doubtless thought of Parrot for the first time, in any close way, when he learned that Parrot was to be his other man. Ivry groaned within at the idea, for he had expected something better than a kid to share the duties which would obviously be onerous.

Ivry stood by the gate, watching the herd of men shuffle slowly through. Weathered farm-hands shoved against bank clerks who were off to glean a healthy penny in vacation. Men with small white faces were pushed aside by adventurers clearly the worse for beer. Ivry noted here and there a character who had long since gone to the bad and was now able to help others. Could he, could he with that kid, possibly compel so many to obey? But if any nervousness assailed Ivry, no curve of face confessed it, except possibly a tighter compression of his lips. He had been the friend of human restlessness too long not to feel a sympathy with these hopeful men, no verbal sympathy of course, but an understanding which was the only sympathy they would react to.

Inaction had developed a coldness in the pit of Parrot's stomach and this was now relieved by the crisis of departure. He and Ivry had established

themselves in the smoking compartment of a tourist coach near the center of the train. The conductor gave them mattresses for the floor.

"Eleven hundred men on board," he said. "I guess you don't know the trip you're in for, you two. I wasn't on the run last year, but they wouldn't let the reporters print what happened. Eleven hundred wild men!"

"They look like good sods to me," said Ivry, coolly.

There was a silence after he had gone, as the two disposed their kit.

"Bedroom, living-room, and bath," said Ivry. "And guard-room," he added dryly, "though I don't think that will be necessary."

"There's one red-haired coyote I'm going to watch," said Parrot. "The one whose ears are as big as his mouth. Did you see him putting ice down everybody's neck?"

"We may have to give him a short course in manners."

"With a boot," suggested Parrot.

"Boots are hardly effective in teaching manners, in the beginning."

"There was a smooth guy got on with some bottles under his coat," said Parrot.

"Well, we'll give everybody the once-over as soon as this train gets under way. What are you doing with that thing, kid?" Parrot had found a billy somewhere, and was attaching it to his person.

"Trying to look like a regular constable."

"Put it away. We're going to run this train by scratching these dogs' backs."

"If they were dogs," said Parrot, "they'd understand. Some of them don't look that good to me. How about handcuffs?"

"They're all right. Stow them on you, but out of sight. And don't get your notions from that conductor. He had a face as long as an excursion ticket. Most of this mob's jakaloo, Parrot. Our job's to be half as pleasant as they are, and we'll all shake hands in Winnipeg. Now we'll begin at opposite ends of the train and take away their liquor. Also their firearms. All set?"

Parrot said so. Ivry glanced covertly at his partner. He looked tense, for all débuts are hard to the high-strung, and Ivry felt that indescribable warming of the heart which the comprehending have for those who are game against odds.

"I forgot to say, kid, that the serge will carry you over any little troubles; that's what it's for. But mind one thing: don't promise anything you don't feel like carrying out. And if any one gets too fresh, I'll be not more than a quarter of a mile to the rear."

Parrot walked up the swaying aisles, bearing a hopeful certainty, among other emotions, to his first public contact. He had caught something of Ivry's amused coolness. He noted the eyes turned on him, friendly or neutral or sleepy or even unseeing, never malicious nor derisive. The men had already fallen into groups. Many, somewhat gone in drink, slumped in their seats, or had had the foresight to

crawl to the sleeping-ledge above. A zoo-like taint already crept along the air. As Parrot slammed door after door, he wondered if he would ever reach the head of the train.

Before he did reach it he met the conductor, whose horse-like face was a shade more cheerless than before. "There's an Irishman two cars ahead I can't handle, Mounty."

"Show him to me," said Parrot.

"Hadn't you better call your partner? He's a whopper."

"They feed us that kind at home," said Parrot. "I won't share him."

"Suit yourself, but I warn you."

The man was large, a huge sodden log of a creature, so nearly drowned in beer as to have retired without taking off his boots, a heavy hobnailed pair. He lay on the top shelf, neither awake nor asleep, but in a vindictive stupor.

"He says he hasn't got a ticket," complained the conductor. "He'll have to be put off at Chalk River."

"He has one all right," said Parrot, "or they wouldn't have passed him through. I'll find it," and, climbing up on the seat arm, he began to go through the harvester's pockets.

He had searched coat, vest, and one trouser pocket without expostulation on the subject's part, and was turning him over when the man came galvanically to life. With a curse he lashed out with those boots. The armored soles came within an inch of Parrot's face. The boy jumped back, escaping a second kick, better aimed, which would have ended

his usefulness and his features. At once the end of the car was awake, heads rising up, mumbling, attentive. Parrot heard suggestions, criticisms, and flushed. With a sudden spring to the seat arm, he grasped the enemy's leg and neck, pulling him to the shelf's edge, and then over, in a cataract of Irishman, upon his shoulders to break the fall.

Parrot reached the floor with a heavy jolt, letting his burden slide. The bump was sobering and too surprising to be comprehended by the dazed drunk. Parrot picked him up and, extracting the ticket from his last pocket, appeased the conductor, while the Irishman, with the swift about-face of the bibulous, thanked Parrot for not letting him be thrown off the train. Parrot told him that all would be forgotten if he would go back to sleep, and proceeded forward, but more reliantly. The first incident, at any rate, was behind.

The first two cars were devoted to women who were going out to cook for the prairie armies. A few husbands were scattered among them. Parrot picked out one of the latter and put him in nominal charge, asking him to report if any rowdies should try to force attentions on the women. Then the boy started slowly down the train, finding the men willing enough to show their bags, nor raising any particular outcry at parting with their bottles. The serge itself was imperative, Parrot found, as Ivry had said. Twice before dawn he had to carry a harvest of bottles to their quarters, and three revolvers. Parrot also made mental note of the faces not to be trusted.

It was just as the first white of morning was silvering the mist on the little lakes, that a collarless man came running to Parrot, crying excitedly: "Come, Mounty, come quick! There's a crazy man in our car and he's out for murder."

Parrot started forward, but his thoughts outran him. It was new to him, all of this, but the newest was how many thoughts could come in the length of one car. And most of them said: This is a job for Ivry. Surely a crazy man is Ivry's job. Turn back and get him. Parrot did not try to answer his thoughts, but kept right on.

A crowd had wedged its coatless shoulders into the aisle, but they had not got too close. A good twenty feet of no man's land intervened between the last bulwark of harvester and the new enemy. He indeed looked crazy. He stood in a torn shirt, his black hair mussed and standing up; a glint of vacancy glassed his somber eyes. He was daring the men, obscenely, to come on. He was master of the aisle, he boasted, and would have anything he desired.

Parrot was certain the man was plain drunk and not insane. He had sufficient control of himself to wield the emergency ax which he had broken the glass to get. He had been a lumberjack, to judge from his talk and from his actions. It looked as if he could do as he wanted with the ax, just as he announced.

"Yeah, come on, you bums, come on and get me, why don't you? You're afraid. That's why, you're afraid. And I don't blame you, neither. Jack Mul-

ligan's the man to be afraid of. Yeah, I'll show you who's boss in this bloody train. . . ." His eye caught the scarlet of Parrot's shoulders emerging from the crowd. "H'lo, kid. Who're you? Stand back there with the rest of them poor bums. I'm boss in this bake-kettle of a car. I'll make the chips—"

Parrot had got quite clear and was going forward. His hand wanted to feel for his revolver, but he held it back. Not that, in this outfit.

"What's a matter with you?" the axman was saying, swaying with the train.

"Drop that ax or you'll see what's the matter," commanded Parrot. "Drop it!"

The harvesters commented hoarsely and differently: "Atta-boy, Mounty!" or "Come back, kid, you'll get hurt." But the man with the ax was the only one he heard.

"Hey, you! did anybody ast you to butt in here? Anybody butts in here's going to get his bloody head chopped off. Back away, redcoat, back out of it 'r you'll get crocked."

The man raised his ax as Parrot was two lengths of its handle away. It was almost as if Stud were pushing him, or Murison. But he knew what he was going to do.

"Get . . . *back!*" the man yelled, and the ax wabbled up in the air.

Parrot raised a hand, and in a slashing blow slammed his stiff-brimmed Stetson into the axman's face. With a curse, the man brought his ax down viciously, and it bit into the floor. Instantly Parrot,

stepping on the handle, knocked the other, still half blinded, as he stooped, and pinned him with his knee against the seat. A dozen hands held him there. Parrot got out the handcuffs and made him safe. Approvals came from all sides, in two or three tongues. The Mounty was all right. The redcoats were all right. A neat trick. A cool trick. And hadn't he jumped just smart enough! Parrot's hands began to tremble a little.

The noise of success reached the next car and brought inquiries. Down the aisle it went, car by car. It reached Ivry, some twelve cars away, as he was bringing in his catch of weapons. When he reached their quarters he found Parrot standing by his prisoner, with a ring of volunteer assistants. Ivry smiled inwardly to see the boy's affectation of calm.

"It's all right," said Parrot, "so long as they come one at a time."

"You won't have any more," said Ivry. "We'll have a lot of friends on this train from now on."

Parrot heard something new in Ivry's words, a release of something warmer, the dryness a shade less dry, and it was as if he had come one barrier closer to his object of respect. He said, however:

"What I want to know is when we get breakfast."

"By the time you've washed that blood off your neck."

"Blood!" Parrot was incredulous.

"Nothing like being interested," smiled Ivry. "You got scratched in the tussle."

Before they had reached afternoon, which seemed

always retreating westward before them, the trip was to sleepy Parrot interminable. Stops had come too frequently, demands were too insistent, to allow even a nap, and the heat would have made an attempt to sleep in their moving oven fruitless. The train clanked along through a country as uninteresting as stones, from siding to siding, being conceded the rails only when the great had lorded it through.

It was the stops that tried the two Policemen increasingly. Strangeness was wearing away, idiosyncrasies were cropping out, their rough edges irritating the heated harvesters. Quarrels began. It was very difficult for the train crew to keep water enough in the tanks for eleven hundred dirty, thirsty men. The bulk of these were a good-natured, stolid lot, accustomed to discomfort. Parrot's innate liking for people, and the manners got at Regina made him already as much a favorite with these as it was wise to be. He was tireless in listening to complaints and trying to fix what could be fixed.

At a station reached near supper-time, Parrot, who was patrolling one end of the platform, heard cries and saw men running toward a small restaurant across the street. Following, he reached the door at the same time as Ivry. They shouldered a way to the counter, to see the red-haired coyote of Parrot's distrust leaning on it, shouting threateningly to the proprietor, a pie upraised in his hand.

"Now how much is it?" he asked. "How much is it, you thieving Chink? Tell me it's ten cents or I'll flatten your flat face with it."

"No thavvy," lisped the inscrutable Chinese.

Ivry deftly lowered the pie, saying, "I'll do the rate-reducing."

"He was soakin' us a dollar for that pie, Mounty!" . . . "Tea's twenty cents a cup, Mounty." . . . "That mutt of a yellow-belly wants thirty cents for a sandwich, mister." . . . "Let us alone, Mounty." . . . "Let's clean him out, boys." . . . "Bust up the Chink and serve him bloody right!" The throaty cries came from all sides. Parrot felt the tension around him.

"I'm running this café," announced Ivry, "and the prices are as follows: tea's ten cents, sandwiches the same, piece of pie the same, oranges . . . what are oranges, Asia Minor?"

"Ten thents," lisped the Chinese, with suddenly restored understanding.

"For two, you mean?"

"Oh yeth, for two; yeth . . . yeth."

"Now, line up and give your orders, men," and Ivry, pushing Parrot around the counter with him, asked the most patient-looking, "What's yours?" dispensing the food as the owner's assistant, while Parrot made change. The atmosphere, concentrated for thunderbolts, was discharged in humor. The hungry men, sucking up their tea, with bumps of sandwiches in their cheeks, spent their good-humored jokes upon their waiters, and Ivry, to Parrot's astonishment, answered each according to his kind. When, thought Parrot, did he pick that up?

And when they were alone Parrot asked, "Where did you get that line, Ivry?"

"I didn't jerk soda long enough to get a line, kid."

"You've got a hot line. You had them eating out of your hand slick."

Ivry's voice took on that tone which Parrot knew was meant to disarm his words: "When you flatter me you should do it in English. I can remember it better."

"It's a pity about my English," retorted Parrot, knowing he had the privilege, "but it's worse about you."

"What do you mean about me?"

"Why don't you cut loose like that in barracks sometime?"

"Why should I?"

Parrot wanted to say that Ivry evidently had a human heart, after all, but was ashamed of it, and he did not quite dare.

"It's a good line," he repeated.

"Well, a good line for you is straight to the hay, kid, while you've got a chance."

But Parrot was not to get his sleep. A hot box brought the train to a standstill in a wilderness of monotony, and it required both peace officers to see that bush fires were not kindled by careless cigarette butts and that the women were not annoyed by too lively chaff or the overhearing of rude language. Tempers took an edge, and the two men in scarlet circulated tirelessly, though without the appearance of interfering, to anticipate racial collisions.

Ivry recalled his officer's words: "Each situation as it arises must be met with tact and also with firmness." There was the point that needed a nice discrimination. Where should tact leave off and firm-

ness begin? As he strolled from group to group, healing a breach here between shanty-man and blue-nose, a breach there between blue-nose and pea-souper, he felt as if all the impulses of these hundreds of hot men were shaping to some calamity. Brooding beneath the heat lay a sulkiness which some strong moment of temper might touch off to insurrection and damage. Ivry recalled Dorrit's assumption that all Mounted Police risks had faded out long since, and his thin lips formed the one disgusted word, "Ass!" The moving train did not shake off his feeling of foreboding.

And worse soon came. At North Bay the tracks of the Canadian Pacific and the Canadian National ran close together, and Ivry saw that by some evil chance the harvester train on the rival road was still sitting in the station. His mind rejected the instant implications—a scarcity of food and civil war—as being too disastrous to harbor. But other minds quickly gave them consideration:

"Geez, Mounty, suppose they've cleaned up on us! What'll we do?"

"Maybe we won't clean them beggars up then," was the answer from several.

Ivry swung off the still moving train and went to the restaurant. The place looked as if it had been raided by locusts. A few men were hogging down victuals.

"Any food left?" commanded Ivry, in unmistakable tones.

"A little."

"Send out and get a lot," he said. "Get it quick," and he passed on through to the other train.

Far to the rear he saw two men in scarlet chatting together, unaware, apparently, of the situation. He strode to them and saw that this was Handsome and Deacon's train.

"How's it going, Ivry?" asked Handsome, unconcernedly.

"Get your swine out of my restaurant," said Ivry, brusquely. "How much longer are you in?"

"I've never seen you so dashed interested," retorted Handsome.

"You lingering fool! You'll be interested if a fight starts."

"Don't lose your hair over it, old man," said Handsome. "They're good boys, aren't they, Deacon?"

"Like a peace conference," said Deacon.

"Very like a peace conference," said Ivry, wryly, pointing to the head of the train. They looked. A bout had already begun. From every side they made out dark figures running to the combat. The magnificence of a general fight was going to be irresistible. Hunger, clothes, black eyes, inflamed noses—nothing should stand in the way. Yells disrupted even Handsome's composure.

"Get your train out," ordered Ivry.

Handsome leaped aboard and pulled the cord. The engineer either had been told beforehand or else was keen enough to take the signal. A whistle, a tolling bell, and turning wheels acted more effectively

as peacemakers than many constables. Ivry with intense relief watched the amusing separations—Nationals racing for the train with C. P. R. apparel, C. P. R.'s forcibly detaining Nationals; last blows, last kicks, echoes of derision. But carnage was averted; and although he was obliged to listen through the rest of the evening to what the C.P.R.-ites had been about to do to the others, he endured it willingly, his mind still praising that alert engineer. Parrot, who protested that he wanted to match Ivry's vigil, was ordered to bed, and through the dragging hours Ivry continued his patrol of the lengthy train.

This patrol was a twenty-one-car-long promenade of recognitions, exchanges, or avoidances. Out of the first mists of anonymity, faces and personalities, pleasant or unpleasant, had long since taken shape. Ivry knew that once each round he would have to sit down and listen to a strange reminiscence from a New Zealander who was "just ramblin' around" the globe. He knew that he would have to think up a fresh excuse for not listening to an insistent bore in dirty spectacles whose mind, as Ivry told Parrot, was built on the principle of a rattle, and all he did was to shake it. Two cars beyond sat a far worse bore, a gabby old man who had once gone to the Klondike and whom the constable privately asked God to reconvey there.

Then there was the solid sunburned farmer who asked Ivry scientific questions, on the principle that the Mounted Police knew everything; and the ex-garage hand with a pen-wiper hair-cut who pressed

his own hand-rolled, tongue-licked cigarettes on the fastidious Ivry; and a foul-mouthed man with agate eyes.

The questions put to Ivry on each tour of the train would have embarrassed an information bureau: questions by dark-faced peasants, in barely intelligible words, by pale grocery clerks, by up-province squatters who swamped the smoking compartments with tobacco juice. Ivry wished heartily that one could make detours on trains. He desired a way around the man with missing teeth who insisted on talking politics; but he looked forward to exchanging jests with a quartet of young loafers full of the sap of life, who played mouth-organs and expected him to tell a better story than they did. One old fellow had brought a fiddle and soon had his whole car singing.

As Ivry reviewed these men—the undersized, small-headed wastrels, the fat and prosperous with turned-out shiny lips, the rolling stones, the dull, the abject, the ambitious—he was visited by a feeling toward humanity which came to him rarely. So rarely, indeed, that he put it down now to lack of sleep. He could not remember when he had last slept, sometime æons before, through the backward perspective of dim time; but he had now won through the first almost overwhelming desire to close his eyes. He knew that his face must look drawn, he felt the glaze on his eyes; but his spirit was injected with resilience. He was enjoying, had his aloof soul only known it, this novel bathing in the common good nature of the crowd.

Continuous vigilance was a necessity, however. A new face was the signal for questioning, and when Ivry was troubled by the features of a man in the last car whom he could not recall seeing, he investigated.

"Open your bag," he said to the intruder.

"You saw my bag," said the other, surlily.

"Then it won't take long to see it again."

"But you saw it, or the other guy did."

"Open it up," said Ivry, in a firmer tone.

The man's eyes hunted his face, but saw no escape there, and with laborious slowness he revealed what the constable had suspected. Ivry quickly determined to rid himself of this potential trouble-maker, whose clinking bottles would be the mother of brawls.

"Come with me," he ordered, "and don't wake my friends, or I won't answer for your skin," and he nodded toward the rear platform.

The bootlegger shrank back into his seat like a dog dreading his bath, but Ivry's grip was forcible and the man was soon in the aisle. He struggled, but he was not made of steel and wrath like Ivry, and his struggles merely knocked him severely against the seat ends in his progress to the door. Sleepy harvesters opened their eyes in the gray dawn and grunted. The bootlegger doubled his resistance as the door swung open and he saw the rushing ties. But Ivry's push was inexorable; they reached the platform and Ivry pulled the engine cord.

"There's no station," panted the bootlegger.

"I know there's not."

"But you can't put me off in the bush! You mustn't!"

For reply Ivry took a firmer hold.

"My bag! Give me my bag!"

The train was slowing quickly. With one strong motion the constable swung him, kicking, over the side, held him, cursing chokingly, dropped him, and pulled the cord twice.

The bootlegger kept his feet and pursued the train, yelling, "MY BAG . . . my bag . . . my bag . . ."

Ivry, carefully smashing the bottles before he tossed them after the man, finally dropped the bag. Two or three sleepy harvesters joined him on the platform.

"Who's that bird?" asked one.

"One of those chaps who like to exercise before breakfast."

The harvester noticed a bottle neck still in Ivry's hand and said, "I get you."

"It's not quite Hoyle," said Ivry, thoughtfully, "but perhaps a few hours with nature may help his soul more than a J. P.'s fine."

The men assented, watching a figure dwindle and diminish down the gray streak between stunted aspens until it flickered out in broken waves of light.

"You oughta seen 'em last year," said one of the harvesters, and he launched out into the thousand and first tale of previous misbehaviors.

They were now running through a stretch of wilderness punctuated with water-tanks and a few bleak

hamlets where food stops were far apart. It was here that the scenes of greatest disorder had occurred the year before, and Ivry had hoped to pass in the dark the places of worst odor. But delays disposed differently, and he found that since the next railway restaurant would not be reached until nearly noon they were to have twenty minutes at Carlyleton for breakfast. He was not reassured at overhearing a harvester say, "Ain't this the place that did for us last year, Reds?" And the coyote replied, "I'll say it is."

As they slowed down, one glance told Ivry all. The windows of the restaurant and of the store were boarded up, the doors obviously intended not to open. Parrot, sleepy-eyed but immaculate, was burnishing the buttons on his button-stick as Ivry looked in to wake him.

"Shake a leg, kid, and keep them from breaking into anything while I hunt up the proprietors and reason with them. These men have to eat."

Parrot swung off the train first and walked, without appearing to hurry, to the larger café. His knock on the door brought no reply. The men were beginning to collect about him, were starting to growl.

"Here's something to help you, Mounty," and a big man shoved a plank at the door.

Parrot intercepted it with a joke on his lips, but he felt that coldness in the pit of his stomach which was not only lack of food. The numbers of men constantly grew, constantly crowded more densely; hungry, disheveled, unrested men, their tempers exhausted by thirty hours of uncomfortable travel.

They made threatening remarks, first at the invisible café-keepers, but more and more pointedly at Parrot.

"Get out of the way, Mounty; we're going to breakfast."

"My partner's gone to open it up," said Parrot, firm in the doorway.

"We'll help him," shouted several loud-voiced harvesters. "Stand aside, Mounty."

The pushing crowd swayed against the constable bracing himself in the doorway.

"Knock the yellow-legs out," came a voice from the rear. "Yank him out!"

The cry was taken up, and the boy, trying to hide the apprehension in his vitals, looked over the faces and saw impatient men and hostile men, but no man smiling. He saw more up-ended planks advancing.

"Don't hurt your backs," he called. "Nobody's going in through this door till it's open."

"Who says they ain't?"

"I do." Parrot was surprised at his words, his voice. If his voice could be that steady, *he* could. But he wished Ivry would hurry. In the crowd were reasonable men, even friendly men, like the New Zealander, but they were angry.

"Gangway!" several voices shouted, and Parrot watched the shoulders of a dark-faced Polack wedging through. He made a blur of motion in the crowd as he pushed. The constable recognized him for the burly hothead he had stopped gambling. As he plowed through the jam he lugged a heavy plank, and, reaching the door, elbowed a space to work in.

"You can't use that here," said Parrot.

"Who's to hinder?"

Parrot put his foot on the plank, which fell.

"Quit your nonsense, or I'll bust your head." The man gave Parrot a shove.

"There's not going to be any damage done here," Parrot ordered. He was not cold now. That shove had turned on some inner power.

The foreigner stooped for the plank.

"Leave it there!"

The men near by were shouting, some encouraging the Polack, some cautioning him. The clamor was bewildering but not so deafening as to keep Parrot from hearing the Polack's filthy reply. Parrot's temper ignited, only for an instant, but in that instant he had drawn his revolver and held it on the man.

"Now, get back, will you?"

To Parrot's amazement the Polack did not step back, and the boy, more swiftly than light, saw his error. He had done the wrong thing. Had he not been instructed not to draw unless prepared to follow up? And only then to prevent a serious crime? If he shot, he might be hanged. If he backed down, his authority would be gone. His mind refused either result. The Polack's huge fist shot at him. Parrot dodged, and reversing his revolver, caught the attacker with the butt of it, on the side of the head. Caught off balance, the stunned Polack fell.

The show of violence had its effect. For a moment the pushing ceased and Parrot, still holding his gun by the muzzle demanded, "Now men, who's next?"

No one budged. Parrot caught sight of the New Zealander.

"Who's next?" he shouted. "Or will your stomachs wait a minute till my partner opens up?" He looked around his crowd. "How about you, Anzac?"

"Sure!" roared the New Zealander. "I'm not that bad off."

Others agreed, still others muttered sullenly. Parrot saw the Polack on his feet. The man started forward, but several grabbed him by the shoulders. Parrot heard his shirt rip, so did the Polack. To Parrot that rip sounded sweeter than music. A laugh went up, and for a second he forgot the sick consciousness of his failure to control himself. The Polack turned on his own pack. If only they would fight among themselves, Parrot could last.

But this relief engaged only a few men. Others pressed on. Parrot held to his doorway. Suddenly he felt the door give, had the sensation of stumbling backward. An arm held him up, a scarlet arm, and he found Ivry beside him in the doorway. Ivry's voice steadied him as it cracked like a mule whip in the rumbling crowd's ears, telling them exactly what would be done and what would not. As he listened, Parrot slipped his weapon back, he hoped unseen.

Later, on the train, he wondered how much Ivry knew. He longed to speak, to ask; he would have preferred even blame to the non-committal silence. But the incident was not discussed.

Twenty hours later, all came to pass as Ivry had foretold and there was hand-shaking at the gates of Winnipeg. Then, filled with coffee, the two sought

out the barracks to report. Parrot, worn with fatigue, felt utterly dejected. The acting constable was not sure that he had made good; Ivry had not told him so. And now he must leave Ivry and the glorious if painful elevation of service in his company, to subside into a trumpeter's retirement. But Parrot mentioned none of these things as they walked. That lesson, at least, had been learned well. Besides, Ivry had not closed his eyes for fifty-five hours.

They were received at divisional headquarters without provoking, in Parrot's opinion, very much excitement. Everybody seemed busy, but the boy's ears caught no sound of curiosity, much less rapture, over his great adventure. Were such hours as he and Ivry had just been through a matter of every day in Mounted Police life?—to be taken as of course? His depression increased.

Ivry was shown a wire.

"Orders to hop back and bring through another train," said the sergeant-major. "The West's crying for more men. Not much sleep this trip, I suppose?"

"Not much," said Ivry. And then: "I can have Trumpeter Laronde with me again?"

"That's the arrangement."

"Hear that, kid?"

Parrot had heard, not only the words but the glad, the incredible thing they did not say.

"That suits me fine," he said quietly. It was almost a pity that Ivry did not see the joy in his eyes, but the constable had started to write out his report.

CHAPTER X

Extracts from G. O.'s

No. 5981

The following transfers to date on 12-6-24:

Reg. No. —— Corpl. Ralstead, C. V., from Ottawa to Halifax.

Reg. No. —— Const. Seaton, W. F. R., from Lethbridge to Banff.

No. 5984

Reg. No. —— Const. Sorley, J. D., is awarded 25¢ per diem extra pay for 11 days during May while employed whitewashing stable.

No. 6012

Reg. No. —— Corpl. Dodd, E. P., is reduced to rank and pay of constable for intoxication, however slight.

No. 6035

Reg. No. —— Const. Seaton, W. F. R., was by Inspector Olivier at Banff fined $25 in that he did absent himself from his duties from 7:20 P.M. until 2 A.M. on the 28th July. Contrary to Rules and Regulations.

No. 6039

The following transfer to date on 17-8-24:

Reg. No. —— Const. Seaton, W. F. R., from Banff to Halifax.

CHAPTER XI

The Motor Bandits of Nova Scotia

"ALL right, Seaton," said Corporal Ralstead. "Let's make Truro before she's awake."

As the car picked up speed the first color of the August dawn began to reveal the harbor of Halifax. Leaving the city, Bill turned north toward central Nova Scotia, where the most amazing scare in rural memory was taking place.

For nearly two months an invisible vehicle or vehicles had borne an armed gang of reckless thugs back and forth across Pictou and Colchester counties, terrorizing widely separated neighborhoods on successive nights. Compared with the depredations of these ruffians, Dick Turpin on his black mare Bess was a sentimental joke. These went farther and did more mischief in an evening than Turpin had accomplished in a month, and the scattered hamlets over a territory of some two thousand square miles could not enjoy an undisturbed night's rest.

As if the actual outrages were not enough, rumors and false alarms completed the country's panic. Shooting was reported from a dozen cross-road villages and confirmed at Tait's Swamp. All storekeepers had armed, and sawed-off shot-guns were coming into favor with the farmers. The local au-

thorities were inadequate and helpless. Everybody was suspect. Night travel was peril itself. But worse than the thefts, worse even than the shootings at shadows, was the fact that the unchecked success of one such gang became a standing invitation to others during the prevailing period of hard times. The road to wealth lay disclosed with its simplicity apparently proven. Three or four congenial thieves had only to get out their weapons, steal a car, and begin. The country-side was theirs.

Being without parallel in the simple custom of the region, the situation had stunned rather than spurred to effort. The man-hunt machinery at disposal was, naturally, meager. There were no police except in the larger centers, and these were besought not to leave their districts undefended. The country itself provided an immunity to the hardy. The indented shore-line was a salt-marsh paradise offering a hundred hidden bases. Forest and field, swamp and hill, lonely roads and isolated dwellings, completed a landscape ideal for such maraudings.

As each morning's papers chronicled fresh attempts on property, the outcry grew. Pressure was put on the attorney-general's department to seek outside help. Special detectives were given the field. The raids increased in frequency.

By August the country had grown overwrought. In addition to large losses by robbery, the business, the security, and even the normal sanity of the settlements were threatened. The people could stand only so much night watching and suspense, and something had soon to be done, not only to catch the bandits

but to calm their victims. At last, therefore, Nova Scotia appealed to Ottawa, and the Mounted Police inspector at Halifax, a young, enthusiastic, and progressive officer, was instructed to put his men in the field.

The worried deputy attorney-general admitted his fears that the three or four Mounted Policemen available would not be able to accomplish what his own experts had failed to do. Yet the moral effect of uniformed men, he said, would at least be beneficial to the district, and possibly something might come of it. Forty minutes after the commissioner's wire, ordering the inspector to give such assistance as he deemed necessary in tracking the armed parties, Constables Stack and Handsome, in uniform, had caught the train to Truro, the center of the disturbed area. Detective-Sergeant Ranger, stationed at St. John, New Brunswick, was notified to go to Truro and take charge. Constable Seaton, who was expected that night from the West, was detailed to drive the Police car, taking Corporal Ralstead to the rendezvous.

The inspector had risen to see them off. "Throw yourselves into this, boys," he said. "These people have no hope of our succeeding, and we've got to show them. Good luck."

"Anybody would work for an O.C. like that," said Ralstead as the car maintained its even pace into the hills.

"What's Sergeant Ranger like?" asked Bill.

"A good practical man, quiet but deadly. I'd bet my stripes that we put a crimp in these pirates' fun,

with him in charge. You've hardened up a lot, haven't you? You don't look as if the time in the outfit had done you any harm. Remember those first days when you were in my barrack-room?"

Bill remembered them with sufficient clearness. Thanks to them and the outfit, he was no longer a lump of unorganized flesh. His wits had taken on more edge, too. If his ambition still was to enjoy himself, he had at least acquired some professional pride. The lapse at Banff sounded worse in G.O.'s than it was. He had done motor-cycle duty there and enjoyed roaring through the passes of the Rockies on the magnificent Banff-Windermere Road, advising tourists, helping them, collaring the incorrigible speeders by day, and acting as escort in the evening to the prettiest he could find.

He had not meant to overdo it. How he had ever let a girl persuade him that he would not be missed for one evening, he did not know. He was deeply sorry as well as angry at the O.C.'s words: "The man who sidesteps his duties for a social engagement is not the man for this detachment." He hated being plucked from his motor-cycle side-car; the transfer was a blow. Crossing the blazing July plains he reflected that he was a failure; the reflection marked a considerable advance for Bill. He wanted only one thing, the chance to get back. And when he arrived at Halifax, at midnight, he was given just four hours' sleep and then his chance would begin. . . . He drove up beside the station at Truro, after a superb flight over greasy roads, as the train from St. John was pulling in.

"Good run," said Ralstead.

Only those interested in milk-cans, apparently, were at the station; then a tall, strong-featured man in civilian clothes appeared by the Police car—Detective-Sergeant Ranger.

"This is fine, boys," he said quietly, "and I'm glad you're not in uniform. See that chap, yonder?" and he nodded toward a young man down the platform. "A Halifax reporter, and our worst enemy for the moment. He knows me, and I had to come with the milk. If he'd spotted me . . . good night! Can't you see the afternoon paper! *'Mounted Police arrive in Truro. Their plans are as follows:'* and then they tell the bandits everything they want to know."

"Maybe that's to quiet the people; or maybe to increase the circulation," observed Ralstead, with a touch of sarcasm rare for him.

"Do you see what I see?" asked Ranger, and they looked down the platform. At the far end Constables Stack and Handsome, conspicuous as scarlet tanagers, were being interrogated by the reporter.

"What sort of men are they?" asked Ranger.

"Stack's a good head," said Ralstead, "and Handsome gets by. Handsome got his stripes for a plucky go with a loony up at Peace River, and then lost them, celebrating."

"Yes, I saw that in G. O.'s."

"You notice that they both kept away from us," said Ralstead. "That's Stack thinking."

"Perhaps it'll be easier for them if we do the same. That reporter looks good for an hour with the

boys. Turn your car, Seaton. I know a Chinese joint in a quiet street. We'll take our kits there and plot a little action."

Bill thought he could foresee action. The sergeant's hair was a bright, energetic red, though his bearing told of an habitual control. The energy was conserved. His lips shut tight. Yet his eyes were not the cold, calculating eyes associated with Bill's conception of a Sherlock, but warm, friendly, nor lacking humor. Ralstead had mentioned that Ranger was an old-timer, but he did not look his forty-two.

While breakfast was preparing, Bill was sent to get the chief of police, LaKadena, a north of Scotland man with a south of Europe name, for a council of strategy.

"Now, men," said Ranger, "nothing was ever won without a plan of campaign. And before we decide what to do, we must see what we have. The chief here will check me up. In the first place, the rumors would stock a newspaper. We've been told that whole parties issue from the Colchester hills in motor-cars, or live on motor-boats along the shore. One woman heard an airplane. We read that they're connected with a traveling circus, and either precede or follow it. Others are sure that they are well-known citizens playing Jekyll and Hyde. By checking up on other reports one sees that they have the ability to appear simultaneously at different places. This easily leads to the conclusion reached by one gentleman that the devil has arrived, as predicted in Habakkuk, chapter so and so."

LaKadena's laugh interrupted him. "If you're

going to branch off into the supernatural, Sergeant, I can match you three to one. It beats me what our people will solemnly advance. Only one proof is lacking: no one has definitely reported the smell of brimstone."

"My point is," said Ranger, "that we must rule rumors out. Now, what are the facts? The places robbed are always general stores, with in one case a post-office. The crimes always occur at night between eleven and daylight. They occur on successive nights, but always at great distances apart. More than a touch of strategy there. They are very daring. In every case I've heard of, the breaking and entering were only a short distance from a dwelling."

"How many bandits are there thought to be?" asked Ralstead.

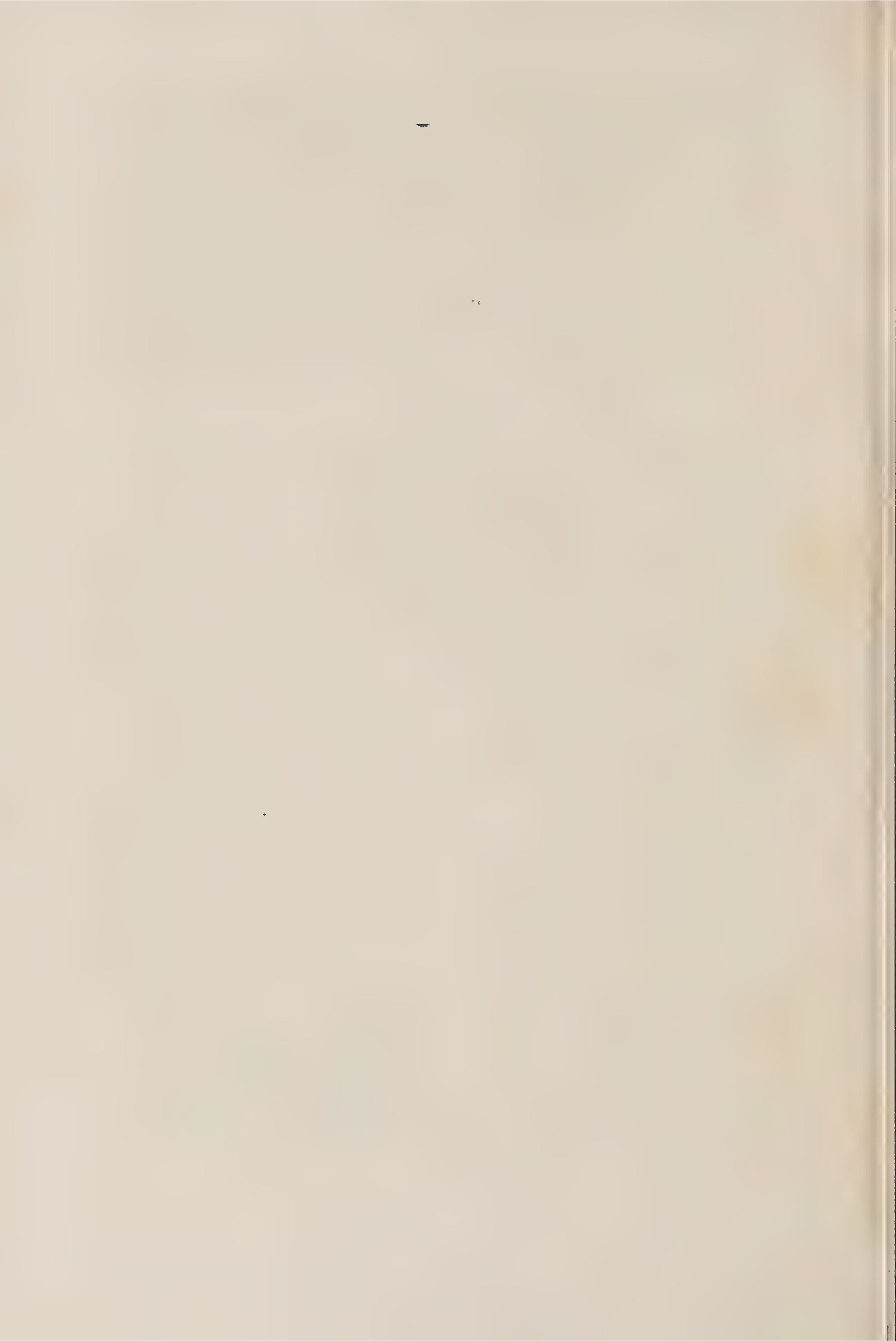
"That's the catch," continued Ranger. "The funny thing is that in the six weeks no bandit has ever been seen. Can you add anything to that, Chief?"

"No bandit has been seen. But people have reported lights of cars in the vicinity of the crimes, and some are certain that they drive a white horse."

"Rumor again," said Ranger. "Now, the thing we must decide on is this: shall we hunt for real clues and genuine information together or separately? We have only the one car, and I favor going together at first, as quickly as possible, to check up on the crimes, get lists of goods stolen, and so forth. Then if it becomes necessary to act independently, we can. But I'm open to suggestions. The chief here has consented to go as road-finder. He can beat the map at that. It means leaving our friends in

Courtesy of National Parks Branch

A BANFF PATROL



uniform here, but I have a job for them, anyway. Anything to add, Ralstead?"

"I'm glad that Mr. LaKadena will go. It means we can avoid asking questions."

No amendments being suggested, Bill was instructed to prepare the car for hard travel, while Ranger had a private meeting with Stack and Handsome.

"I've pleasant news for you fellows," he said. "We're going to leave you to enjoy yourselves in this town." The constables' faces lengthened. "I'm sorry, but it's necessary, and your rôle will be this: The two of you are on furlough, understand? You know nothing whatever about local conditions, and, since you expect to leave for the West shortly, you don't care."

"Furlough! In this place?" said Handsome, smiling wryly. "That's a good one."

"But will anybody believe us?" asked Stack.

"That's just the point," said Ranger. "They won't. They'll know you're keeping something back, and they'll spend their time guessing. See? Well, keep them guessing."

"I see," said Handsome. "You want us to make an artistic job of it."

"That's right. Keep them guessing and they in turn will keep you covered, and then we can get away and gather a little information with a free hand. That's your pleasant occupation. If you see us, don't recognize us. But keep in touch with the local police station. We'll communicate with you through that. LaKadena's going with us. And one

thing more. You remember the reporter you entertained at the station? That was good work. I hear he is unhappy that you know so little. Keep him unhappy, boys."

"Or, if necessary, keep him happy?" asked Handsome, meaningfully.

Ranger smiled. "In any event, keep him." He left them not nearly so cast down.

It was mid-morning before the Police car started from Truro on its uncharted mission. Ralstead sat beside Bill, while Ranger talked hunting and fishing with LaKadena on the back seat. They were headed for Pictou, the northeastern limit of the depredations, as being the safest way of throwing the newspaper scouts off the trail.

"By the way," said Ralstead, "are we to be tourists or ourselves?"

"Doesn't that depend on the company we keep? I suppose we'll have to confide in the robbed storekeepers whose lists of goods we're after, but there's no use giving anybody else that advantage."

"Whatever we do, we can be sure the news will be over the two counties in a few hours." said LaKadena. "The speed of gossip in this region amounts to a feature."

"Then the fact that nothing true gets around is our one hope."

Bill wondered how anything got about in such a country, and he was thankful to have LaKadena along to interpret the undesignated roads. All was silent and mysterious for many miles at a stretch.

The heavy air drifting in from the bays smelled of the sea. When they passed anybody, Bill noticed the instant glances of suspicion cast at his party and the car. More than once he saw the license numbers taken down by a storekeeper sitting on inspection in his doorway. Late in the afternoon, as they drew up before an isolated farm-house to ask for water, the door was hastily slammed in their faces. The entire region seemed infected with panic.

"Poor souls," said Ranger; "they are afraid of their shadows."

"And I don't blame them," said LaKadena. "It's hard lines to lay up a competence in this district and then be cleaned out in a night. It's enough to make you speak ha'sh, as we say."

"Somebody's bound to be shot pretty soon," said Ralstead.

"It's getting to be an armed camp, all right."

They arrived in the pretty seaboard town at the end of day and went to the largest store which had been robbed. The owner was closing up, affixing home-made shutters to windows unused to any protection. Ranger made himself known. But the usual evidence did not convince the old man. He wiped a puzzled brow. His loss had suddenly turned all men thieves and liars in his estimation.

"How do I know what you say's true?" he asked. "There's queerer things yet been done in this town."

LaKadena came to the rescue, explaining that he was chief of the Truro police, and had not yet fallen to associating with bandits; much as his friends

resembled them, he could not help adding. The old man, with something of the vacant, unprotected air of his windows, finally admitted their right to investigate.

"But you never know," he added, "you never know, these days. Especially after last night."

"What happened last night?" asked Ranger.

"Didn't you hear about last night?" and the old man's voice squeaked. "Why, they held up the Rev. Gribben. Didn't you hear that?"

"In town here?"

"Why, yes. He was coming back from a church entertainment, late, it must've been ten o'clock, and he saw a car passing him slowly. And then it passed him again, and he saw there was no license tags. Nary a one. And when he got to Meeting House Lane he noticed a flash ahead of him. He took it for a flash of his own headlights on a piece of glass or something. And suddenly some one jumped in front of his car, and turned a flash on him and ordered him to hold up. It was a tall man, Gribben says. 'Nothin' doin',' he yelled to the bandit, and he crouched down and jammed his foot on the gas and turned into the lane on two wheels, he says, just shaving the bandits' car, which they'd parked on the wrong side. Now, what do you know about that? And him a minister of the Gospel."

"And would the Rev. Mr. Gribben be able to recognize the man, do you suppose?" asked Ranger.

"No, I guess he was too excited. They took four men into custody this morning, but the Rev. Gribben said none of them was the particular bandit he seen.

And they had nothing again them except they were out late, driving an old car that sounded like a bark-mill."

"Well, we're going to end all this nonsense," said Ranger. "We want a complete list of the goods stolen from your store, with marks of identification, if you can give them. And while you're making that out, we'll look around the store with your permission."

"I guess I'd rather go with you," said the old man, quickly.

The four exchanged quiet smiles.

They found no suspicious traces, no clue of any sort, and while the old man was compiling his losses they visited a store farther along the street. This owner had nearly completed his system of burglar-alarms. He at once proved affable and confiding.

"It's some job closing up, these nights," he explained. "Now, Mr. Hardy, where you've just been, has got his son, and old man Forbes hires a night watchman to walk around the house outside all night, and Moses of Moses Brothers sets up with a gun. But I'm too old for all that. I've got my own way. See those dish-pans? That's my invention. Nobody can open a window or a door, when they're set, without bringing all-get-out a-clattering down."

"It ought to work," said Ranger, trying to keep a straight face.

"Now, my brother-in-law over at Clum Hill, his store was broken into, but he'd put a couple of dummies inside."

"Dummies!" exclaimed Bill.

"Yes, stuffed dummies, and they scared the bandits off."

The next day took the party, by short pulls and long, over a large territory, and fourteen hours of work yielded precisely one clue. The window of a store at Relianceville had been pried open with a jimmy and the jimmy was split at the end, possibly for pulling nails. The same jimmy had been employed at Dunn's Corners. This was the first piece of evidence. It had required thirty-six hours to obtain.

While the others were examining the store at Dunn's Corners, Bill inspected the tracks of the bandit's car, which still showed in the dried mud of a recent shower, putting down in his note-book the "nobby" tread of the right front tire, the "straight line cord," "maple leaf," and "plain" of the others. At the same time Ranger had made a find, for in the soft mud of the cellar he was able to distinguish the shoe marks of three men, sizes ten, eight, and six. But these were the only new clues at the end of the second day. Impatience, not yet expressed openly, was beginning to show on the detectives' faces.

"These people will persist in showing us clearly what we already know," said Ranger.

"And taking so long about it," added Ralstead.

"Wait till to-night," said LaKadena, as if he had a treat to offer. "Wait till we reach Tait's Swamp to-night. There has been shooting in that village. We're sure to find something."

"Shooting?" asked Ranger; "or rumors of shooting?"

They laughed; it was their one joke, meaningless to others, perhaps, but theirs.

"Wilkins will know," said LaKadena. "He's the bank manager, a friend of mine, the sane man of the community. He'll know."

"You're lucky to come before dark," said the sane man of Tait's Swamp to the four. "This place is out of its head. They hate me because I won't believe that Sammy Gall shot a bandit."

"Did he see one?" asked LaKadena. "It's more than we have."

The bank manager explained that he had lent a revolver to an excitable store-owner who begged for it in order to sit upon the hotel balcony opposite his store and keep watch.

" 'You'll fall asleep, Sammy, and shoot yourself,' I told him," said the bank manager; " 'you can't snipe bandits nights and talk about it all day without getting worn out.' But, gentlemen, don't get your ideas from me. Go interview the local brave for yourselves. The town has the idea that Sammy saved it, and the idea persists, rather, with Sammy himself."

Mr. Gall, indeed, confessed to as much. It had happened on the third night of his sitting up, a night warm and overcast. It was late when he heard cars being driven along the street below him, slow down, and stop. Two men got out and tried the doors of the stores, one after another, as if looking for one expected to be open. He waited until they reached his store, and then fired.

"At the man?"

"Certainly, and as they ran for their cars they returned the fire."

"At you?"

"Of course at me."

"But they didn't hit you?"

"They were too alarmed."

"And you wounded one."

"Maybe more than one."

"What evidence have you?"

"My dear man, what evidence would I likely have unless I killed him?"

"Cries, blood on the ground, subsequent movements. I should like to have the shells from their revolvers."

Mr. Gall had no thought of the shells. He took the Police to the battle-ground, but no shells were to be picked up. He was able to exhibit the damage wreaked by the bandits. There was a bullet hole in the show-case in his own store. The bullet had come through the closed door. It showed, said Mr. Gall, to what dangers he had been exposed.

Ranger said nothing until he had looked about, Mr. Gall meanwhile filling in the leaner parts of the story.

"You must have had a powerful dream," said Ranger at last. "You fired that shot yourself."

"*I* did!" exclaimed Mr. Gall, in hurt amazement. "You don't know what you are talking about." But the sergeant induced him to squint through the show-case hole upward along the line of fire. The veranda plainly showed.

"The fool's lucky not to have a murder on his

hands," said Ralstead later, at their pajama conference that night.

"There were no bandits here the night he speaks of," said Ranger. "That much we're fairly certain of, from what your friend Wilkins says. And we do know that they were busy near South Potts. Gall is lucky, as Ralstead says, not to be up for manslaughter."

"Our next job is to keep Bill from the same," said LaKadena. "If he gets another puncture in this town, he'll shoot up the place."

"Four tacks in as many miles looks bad," said Ralstead. "He kept his temper better than I would. You ought to've seen that kid when he landed at Regina."

"He's got good stuff in him," said LaKadena. "I like the way he handles his job. And he's always last to bed, for looking after his baby."

"We're not getting ahead very fast, I'm bound to say," said Ranger.

But as he spoke, Bill entered, brimming with eagerness. "We've got them, Sergeant," he said. "We've got them sure. It's a fact."

"Where did you leave them?" asked Ranger, smiling, but they crowded about him so that he would not have to speak loud.

"It's the garage," said Bill. "I went down there near the shore, because it's the only one open at night. A darned queer place for one, I thought. That got my suspicions up. Then while he was giving me air (McElvert's the man's name) I looked at an old car outside. And, Sarge, it had four differ-

ent tires, the same make as I figured out at Dunn's Corners. Remember? In the mud? And, listen, Sarge: they were on the same wheels."

"Say!" exclaimed LaKadena. "That sounds as if you got something."

"What license?" asked Ranger.

"None, Sarge. It hadn't any. That's another reason I'm sure. You know what the reverend somebody in Pictou said? No license."

"Does this McElvert look the part?" asked Ralstead.

"The first thing I thought of," said Bill. "He's a little runt of a chap. 'Pretty heavy work for you alone,' I said to him. 'I ain't alone,' he said and I kidded him along until I found out he had two helpers, a big chap and a medium-sized one, just like those shoe tracks you measured, Sarge."

"Where are these others?"

"In town here. They work days. That would leave them off to do their stuff. The car's muddy, too, a rattletrap. Will you come now, Sarge? Maybe we could arrest them right off."

"Aren't you traveling rather fast?" asked Ranger. "The tire combination sounds impressive, but we don't know a thing about the garage hands, whether they are away on most nights, whether they're newly prosperous, as our bandits certainly must be by now, or what."

"Yes, but we could inquire, sort of cautiously."

"It's rather difficult to inquire in a village of two hundred people without starting two hundred of them talking, especially at this hour. No, Bill, if

your men are the men we want, we must go at them easy; we must have some story to tell them, first; and most of the stories I know sound better in daylight."

"Did you see any of the stolen stuff around the garage?" asked Ralstead.

"I didn't notice. Can I go back, Sarge? I could watch outside."

But Ranger was averse to any suspicious movements on their part, and Bill, thinking Ranger was unintelligently minimizing his discovery, went to bed cursing his superior's denseness and decrying discipline to himself. And he was all eagerness when, in the morning, Ranger took him to the garage, after sending LaKadena to inquire of the bank manager, and Ralstead out on a general news-foraging trip.

The car was still there, battered and muddy. Its tire combination was a fact hard to get past. Ranger had decided on their story. He wanted, he said, to hire a car, and perhaps to buy it. He intimated that he would need it that night, all night. His tone sufficed. The garage hand, not the runt this time but the big one, knowing that rum-runners did not stick at prices, fixed his high, playing into Ranger's hand. He said he would think it over. Meanwhile Bill had been covertly scrutinizing the premises for stolen goods.

"Not a straw of direct evidence," said Ranger, when they had got out of hearing. "Suspicions are not much good in court, are they, Bill? We don't know enough yet to make a break, and if we did we certainly should not get our warrants from the J.P. here. Aren't you glad you didn't sit up all night?"

Bill felt miserable; his spirits seemed permanently sunk, and he had an ominous pain beneath the belt. Was he going to get appendicitis or something? "Forget it," he told himself, and events helped him; he had four more punctures in the first mile from the Swamp.

The others were not in much better temper. They were starting on a cold trail. The bank manager had promised LaKadena to keep a watch on the garage car and telephone to Truro if anything occurred, but he did not think anything would occur.

"In a detective story your bank manager would be the villain," said Ralstead. "He's too smooth."

"You're getting as bad as the natives, if you think he's it," laughed LaKadena. "This is a great junket."

But they were refused a meal at the only place they saw at noon.

"If we look so hard after three days that they won't break a pan of milk for us," said Ranger, "we'll be shot for the bandits in six."

"Maybe we won't have to wait six," said LaKadena, with a smile.

They recalled this remark two hours later when they reached North Emsbury and the newspapers, reading this surprising headline:

MR. DOLTON OF HOPELY CENTER
HAS CLOSE CALL WITH BANDITS

"Why, that's where we were yesterday afternoon!" exclaimed Bill.

"Listen," and Ranger read the following item:

"Mr. Harvey Dolton, of Dolton and Son, whose grocery store supplies Hopely Center and environs, entertained four of the notorious bandit gang which has been responsible for the paralyzing series of outrages throughout these counties, for a few minutes yesterday afternoon. About two o'clock Mr. Dolton noticed a car containing four men, stopped by his door. One of them came into the store, and under cover of purchasing cigarettes, asked several pointed questions which Mr. Dolton wisely declined to answer. It soon began to dawn on Mr. Dolton who these unwelcome visitors might be, especially as their leader carried and displayed a roll of bills. Mr. Dolton bravely followed the bandit to his car, in order to note the appearance of these brigands for whom long jail terms are waiting. The driver seems no more than a boy, well set up and with an intelligent face. The bandit who entered the store was a man of forty, tall, sandy-featured, with *red* hair. Mr. Dolton said there would be no trouble identifying him. The others kept their faces turned away. The red-haired bandit jumped into the car, which was a McLaughlin Buick showing signs of travel, with many patches on the tires, which vanished at an unusual speed in a cloud of dust. The bandits were evidently making for Tait's Swamp. This brazen appearance in daylight is the first, et cetera, et cetera."

"That won't help us much in our business," said LaKadena. "Our next purchase will be a little hair-dye, eh?"

"You can't dye the patches on the tires," said Bill, "and you know what the O.C. has to say about unnecessary expense."

While their late lunch was preparing, Ranger

talked to Truro on long distance. He came from the telephone booth looking rather grim.

"Millsville has been burned to the ground, boys," he said solemnly.

"By the bandits?" they all asked.

"By the bandits. First robbery, then arson. It's a crime. Two stores, a blacksmith shop, carriage shed, two barns, a garage, and most of the homes; fifty thousand dollars' loss."

"That'll be the whole of the life savings of those families," said LaKadena, "and no insurance. I know that country."

"No insurance is right. Stack says that the Halifax papers are raving. They want to know why no action whatever is being taken to suppress the bandits. They ask sarcastically why two members of a famous but possibly overrated Force dawdle around Truro all day while the country is burning."

"It's a hard part to play, Stack's and Handsome's," said Ralstead.

"They're doing it well. They've got that reporter with them and still guessing. Stack says that they are trying to sort out the rumors and alarms as they come by. Your bank manager, LaKadena, has telephoned about that car; it hasn't budged. And where do you suppose there was an early-morning robbery? At South Emsbury, four miles away."

They sat amazed. It was as if they were in a fog, able to distinguish sounds but unable to follow; lost, misled, and overcast in mood. A situation of swiftly moving elements clothed itself in obscurity. Ordinarily four days and nothing accomplished would

not have reproached them. In this case everything pressed for some result, some action to bring confidence to the region. They had worked, and each effort had terminated in futility.

A sentence in a newspaper editorial caught Ranger's eye and he read it out: "'Irreverent persons, in commenting on the inefficiency prevailing, are even expressing the opinion that a fellow-feeling may perhaps be making the Government more than kind.'" He threw the paper down. "Helpful things, newspapers," he said bitterly.

Their dinner-table was a council board.

"We have a choice of two courses," said Ranger. "We can go to Millsville, where the bandits most certainly are not, and where everybody who has a vehicle will be, or we can leave that for the moment and investigate South Emsbury."

All agreed that South Emsbury was the first step.

"Now I'm convinced," Ranger went on, "that the bandits are local men, men who know the countryside as Bill knows the inside of a car. That's why they confine themselves to these two counties."

"Did it ever occur to you that we are sitting about at the center of their operations?" asked LaKadena.

"I haven't been able to apply the fact. They decide on their victims by no geographical progression. But what I started to say is this: If they are local people, there must be some evidence of their success locally. They've acquired several small fortunes. Why have we run into no suddenly prosperous people?"

"Have we thought enough about that?" asked Ralstead.

"Perhaps they haven't cashed in on their fortunes yet," said LaKadena. "All the things taken so far have been household goods, clothes, food, useful articles, and not so easily identified."

"I don't agree there. We've whole lists of things you can identify. No, our trouble is that we've had to stick too close together, for the sake of speed, to hear what's going on. For some reason, these people are getting away with it, and no questions asked by a lot of people who could ask them. Don't you think?"

"No, you're handing them too much," said LaKadena.

"Well, I'm no friend of theories. Facts now, and always facts. Let's go to South Emsbury, and perhaps we'll pick up the right clue there."

They went out to their car, depressed by the very inconclusiveness of everything, to have the first bomb of the day exploded at their feet. Beside the Mclaughlin stood a Ford, in excellent condition, wearing tires of the identical makes and in the identical positions as those of the dilapidated Ford at Tait's Swamp, and also of those tracks in the mud at Dunn's Corners. They said nothing; their minds were trying to adjust themselves to the findings of their eyes. It was like endeavoring to disbelieve some just exposed illusion. This car could not by any process of rehabilitation be the other. Yet those tires!

"Some coincidence!" said Ralstead.

"Yes, and it knocks out what we thought was our best clue," added Ranger.

"How so?" asked Bill, relinquishing his discovery hard.

"Why, if two cars can wear the same combination, then the marks in the mud can belong to a third car, and they probably do. It turns the whole thing into the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence."

"And if circumstantial evidence is a poor thing in court, it is also poor in investigation," said Ralstead.

"Get your gas, Bill," said Ranger, "and we'll pull out."

Nobody uttered a word while the garage man was giving them the gas. They hardly listened to him as he poured out the usual commonplaces about the plague of bandits, until he said:

"If them dumb stupid police would open their eyes a bit, they might see something."

"That's right," said Bill, who was paying him. Bill was conscious of the sudden quiet on the rear seat, and felt inspired to cast an exhibition fly at his garrulous fish. "That's sure right. I don't suppose there's been a policeman around for weeks."

"Nary a one."

"That's just what we were saying," continued Bill, "but they'd be the last to see anything if they did come."

"Ain't that the truth, brother?" and the garage man winked.

Bill felt that the silence of the rear was intended for encouragement, and he went on:

"A case like this makes you want to be a detective. It oughtn't to be so hard spotting these boys."

"You've said it. They give themselves away. I was telling Noah that yesterday. (Noah's my brother.) 'Why don't they put a question or two to Lefty McSlavin, now?' says I."

Bill nodded, prickling with anxiety to say the right thing. "Sure, Lefty gets by too easy."

"You know Lefty?" asked the garage man. Bill felt the ground drop from under.

"Well, I'm not his best friend," said Bill.

"There's mighty few that."

To Bill's relief, Ranger took up the thread of talk: "What's Lefty doing for a living now?"

"The same old thing; only his mill ain't been working for a while."

"Then it's true that he's moved over to Mack's Grove?"

"Whoever told you that? No, he's still camping out at Pensionville and coming in here for gas. I wouldn't mind his running up the charges, if he wouldn't sport that cigar in his face."

"So Lefty's smoking cigars now, is he?" asked Ranger. "How come?"

"There's more than you askin' that question, brother. One thing's certain: Nobody thinks enough of him to give 'em to him. You fellows out fishin', I suppose."

"No. We're taking the Saturday off to look at property. Good-day."

Investigations proved that McSlavin had been out of work; that he kept two or three of his hands on;

that he lived at two places where half-completed jobs had been dropped; that he was a clever man of forty or forty-five, neither liked nor disliked, but certainly not troubled by vexatious gnawings of conscience in small matters, such as bills, rents, wages.

It was more instinct than anything they had been told which brought them to McSlavin's mill late in the afternoon. It was situated in a creek bottom reached by a lane, and Bill was left in the car to give warning of any surprise from the outside. The rest walked down to the mill camp. The screen door opened; the other door was locked. A word, sharp, in a new tone, from Ranger drew their attention to a new hinge on the screen door.

"There!" said the sergeant. "Rawhide! Do you remember the man at Dunn's Corners telling about his side of belt-lacing? I'll bet you this hinge's been cut from that."

"We've run them to earth!" said Ralstead, whose nose was pushed into the screen on the window. "Rifles, soap, clothes, knitting yarn; a lot of stuff you don't use in milling."

"Boys, boys!" said LaKadena. "This is the big day!"

It was the first actuality. In the greatest excitement they scouted around, first to be sure no one was about, then to make certain of their find. For, after all, as Ranger reminded them, it was not criminal to keep knitting yarn in a planing-mill. Eventually a ladder let them in from above. It was a fantastic assortment that they found. Dental creams were dumped beside corsets, groceries by

boots. Personal kits were discovered bearing the names of J. McSlavin, J. Garpe, and Sam Ventura. Ranger rummaged out a strong box.

"Toss me those pliers," said Ranger. "We've got to see into this."

But just then Bill's horn sounded. The men, escaping as deftly as possible, wiped the excitement from their faces with the sweat as they ambled back to the car in time to meet an angry-looking man, evidently from the house at the lane entrance.

"What are you doing?" he asked sharply. "Who gave you leave to go back there?"

"We thought there might be water around your camp, sir. We've been getting drier and drier," said Ranger.

"That water's not fit to drink. Come up to the house and I'll give you some good water."

He scrutinized the quartet as they drank, but the quartet had grown inured to scrutiny and drank the good water as if they had wanted it.

"Are we on the right road to Harmony?" asked Ranger.

"Why, no; you took the wrong turn back about four miles. Go as far as the big bridge and turn sharp left."

They got away, but stopped when out of sight, to tell Bill and to drop Ralstead.

"Sorry to break up the party," said Ranger, "but we can't leave all that evidence unwatched, particularly with that smooth water-dispenser so suspicious. You'll have to do as you think best in the event of needing aid, Ralstead. Perhaps we can be

back early to-morrow. But our cue is to locate Lefty."

So they abandoned the corporal to find his way back in the dusk for an unknown term as watchman, while they set about inquiring the whereabouts of McSlavin. This was not easy. The country-side, empty enough by day, was deserted by night, a no man's land given over, in the rural mind at least, to bandits. The first party they tried to inquire of increased its speed and flew past in a fit of nerves. They realized that they might be fired on for bandits. Bill almost hoped for danger; it would take his mind from his abdominal discomfort.

At last an old codger, half drunk and singing, in a buggy, could not escape them.

"Where is Lefty McSlavin workin'? He's not workin' at all. Last I heard he was campin' over past Wet Beach, him and his four hands. It's all of sixty mile."

It was a night of misdirection, of blow-outs, of delay, and it is not on the books how many miles Bill drove before nine of the morning, when Ranger was at last in touch with Stack, ordering him to hire a car and, with Handsome, meet them at a certain place with warrants.

The meeting was an eager reunion, for the two in Truro had had a difficult time.

"We kept that reporter hanging around for four days," said Stack, "and then he up and called us names, a lot of ungrateful names. He said we were a bunch of low, bloody, spineless, dog-livered liars, and he hopped a car for parts unknown. I'm afraid

that he's going to miss this party. You've been in the wilds so long, Sarge, that you have no idea the stir that the Millsville fire has made. Our outfit's been cursed to hell and back for doing nothing. If we can cop these bandits now, we'll have friends for life."

The camp was coming in sight, a low shack, covered with tar-paper, set in a wilderness of raspberry and blueberry bushes, with mounds of sawdust for scenery.

"Load your guns, boys," said Ranger. "There are supposed to be five of them."

"I see two over in the bushes," said Stack, "picking berries."

"We'll just saunter in," said Ranger. "Bill, turn your car to block the lane."

The suppressed excitement of the walk down the lane made Bill oblivious of the unceasing ache in his side. In two minutes, in a minute, in forty seconds it would happen. But what? Would these men who had desperately persisted through two months of hounding shoot at sight?

The berry-pickers were working away from the shack. Ranger decided not to weaken his little force by sending for them, but continued to the shack, motioning for Stack and Bill to pass around it and cut off escape. He and LaKadena and Handsome walked quietly to the screened doorway, Bill reached the back door in time to see the event. Two men sat on the bed, playing cards; a third, with a pail of berries in his hand, stood looking on.

Bill quivered with anticipation as he heard

Ranger say evenly, "Now, then, fellows, everybody stand up, please."

The surprise had been complete. "What do you want?" one asked.

"Stand up, please," said Ranger, more firmly.

"Who the hell are you?" asked one.

Handsome's uniform showed in the doorway.

"Cheese it. It's *them!*"

They were up quickly enough now. They sprang for the back door. Stack and Bill pushed them in. One jumped toward the bed, tore back the mattress, and was pulling at a holster when Ranger secured him. The oldest, who turned out to be Lefty himself, was subdued first. Stack, Handsome, and Bill were dispatched for the berry-pickers.

Bill was violently sick, for his side had received a blow. Ranger noticed his pallor when he came in, but judged that it was due to reaction or fatigue or lack of sleep. Bill had said nothing.

The four men and a boy were handcuffed, panting, shaking the sweat from their faces, a hard-looking lot.

"Some one's talked on us," swore the prisoner called Chick Fenn. "Some one's going to get hurt."

"That's a poor line to start off on," said Ranger, who now gave the formal warning that anything they said would be used against them.

The premises were found to be a bonanza. Goods of every sort—tobacco by the caddy, suitcases filled with articles which one or the other of the robbers identified—were checked up. The boots on one were

matched with an empty box in the Dunn's Corners store. A pair of new trousers still tagged was mated with the coat a prisoner had been wearing. Good hours were spent in itemizing the account.

The captives talked in sullen whispers, and a chance remark brought out the fact of another man's existence, one Samuel Ventura, driver of the famous bandit car, who lived, as a receipt showed, in Leasdale.

It was dark and threatening thunder before the victorious procession of two laden cars reached Truro jail, where the prisoners were quietly lodged. With the last bandit yet to be caught, there must still be an interval before the shouting. So Bill, overhauling his car, set out with Ranger and LaKadena in a sweeping thunderstorm to find Ventura.

A blackness such as no lights could pierce hung over the land. It required strength and skill to keep the car on the slippery road, and speed was necessary. Ventura might take alarm. And for Bill's sake also speed was necessary, for he bore a subdued but ceaseless pain with him, combated only by an obstinacy bred at Regina, an obstinacy which would not let him break into the pursuit by telling Ranger of it until they had reached the end.

It was dawn when they found Ventura, just putting his foot out of bed, his suitcase packed,—with stolen goods,—ready to take the train to Halifax. He did not take that train. Bill noted the tires on the bandit car in Ventura's shed; the same combination of four different treads as observed in the mud at Dunn's corners, on the old flivver at Tait's

Swamp, and on the new Ford at North Emsbury. He was too sick to care.

That afternoon the last of the bandits who had changed a widespread community into a region of armed and sinister suspicion, was lodged safely with his brothers in the Truro jail. For five days of concentrated search this joyous finish had twinkled like a will-o'-the-wisp in a swamp; for thirty-nine hours the party had been continuously on the job, without sleep, without a set meal. Yet an infinity of little labors still pressed, and it was midnight before Ranger, Bill, and the retrieved Ralstead reached their Chinese lodgings.

"Tea and bed for mine," said Ranger.

"Just bed for me," said Bill.

"You look awfully white," said Ralstead. "Are you sick?"

"The kid's done in," said Ranger. "But it's been a big day's work for the outfit, boys, if we do say it between ourselves. Now, what in Heaven's name can that be?"

Somebody was pounding at the door, and Ranger heard a voice, dimly familiar to him, arguing with the Chinese.

"I tell you they are," said the voice, angrily. "He is! Let me in to him! I saw him come in!"

"No man like that here," they heard the Chinese say.

"I *know* he is!" with a rattle of oaths, "and I've *got* to see him."

"Man like that here yesterday. No man like that here now."

"Let him come in, Lee," called Ranger.

It was the reporter. He was much excited over the news and said that he wanted full particulars.

"Sit down and have some tea," said Ranger. "Now, you know I like you newspaper men, Jimmy. You work hard and your hearts are in the right place. But you know, too, that full particulars, or any particulars, go first to my officer commanding. That's iron law."

"But I must write something. What can I say?"

"Three things, Jimmy. Say that the bandits have been caught, that the Mounted Police, assisted by the chief of the Truro police, caught them, and . . . good night."

Bill's stay in the Halifax hospital was as near to a continuous personal ovation as he expected ever again to enjoy. He had held on to the McLaughlin's wheel until even the preoccupied Ranger noticed the pain in his face and hurried him to Halifax. Reporting, he had fallen in a faint at his officer's feet. In six hours his appendix was out; in twenty his officer commanding was congratulating him. The day after, his mother and father arrived from Ottawa to see their hero son.

Nor was this estimate confined to the family. Nova Scotia's bandit-ridden counties went happy with relief. The newspaper carried columns on the Mounted Police, and Bill amused himself by reading editorial eulogies of himself and all his friends. For they had caught the right snakes, and after long and painstaking work Ranger and Ralstead proved

their connection with the Millsville fire, which, it is only fair to the bandits to state, was the result of carelessness after their housebreaking, and not arson. The attorney-general was delighted, and people journeyed miles to Truro to see the men who had liberated them from loss and fear.

"But you could see they were disappointed," said Ranger to Bill, on his first visit to the hospital. "They expected to find the Stetson and red coat on all of us, the breeches and the horses. But that rig and this work don't team up very well, do they? Well, we got them, anyway, no matter what we wore. Do you remember . . . ?"

And they reminisced until the detective-sergeant's time was up.

CHAPTER XII

Extracts from G. O.'s

No. 6212

All applications for furlough and all pass forms and furlough papers and general orders to be made out from or to reveille, midday, or midnight.

No. 6234.

The following transfers to date on 1-12-24:

Reg. No. —— Corpl. Ralstead, C. V., from Halifax to Oolichan, B. C.

Reg. No. —— Const. Stack, R. S., from Halifax to "O" Div'n.

No. 6301

The undermentioned, Constable Seaton, W.F.R., having purchased his discharge, is struck off the strength of the Force from 1-1-25.

No. 6423

Referring to G.O. 6329, part 2, the initials of Special Constable Chase should read A. E. and not as stated.

CHAPTER XIII

The Burnt Lake Patrol

THE motor-boat *Laura,* owned and run by Nestor Beek, the magistrate of Oolichan, and chartered by the Mounted Police, was heading north along that chain of waterways which lead into the very depths of unknown British Columbia. Corporal Ralstead and Stud had managed an unobtrusive departure on their emergency patrol. The mists of dawn still hung on the mountainsides ahead, and day, from a cloudless sky, shone pacifically above. The still landscapes, the blue heavens brimmed with peace and security. But Stud could not share the feeling. He knew too much of what was before him and the corporal.

The detachment at Oolichan in central British Columbia had jurisdiction over a territory so large that the map-makers had much of it yet to see, and so wild that fifty miles north of the new barracks the Indians discussed, with religious one-sidedness, the consequences of the evil eye.

Thirty years before, during the Yukon scramble, these Indians' fathers had been visited by the Mounted Police; but for twenty years no redcoats had come at all, and the savages, being unversed in the politics of provinces, said openly that it was be-

cause the white men's hearts had failed them. While they were to be pardoned for their reasoning, it had not made the return of law and order easy. Sergeant Frees, detailed to establish a detachment at the railway siding named Oolichan, soon heard that his coming was resented by those who lived invisible behind the outlines of high mountains. More than one message filtered through passes and down the lakes, from the Burnt Lake and Kitwancool bands, that they were grown up now and did not require supervision. Their boasts outdid their messages.

It was Stud who had fallen across the news that made a show of authority imperative. Near Oolichan lived the Fort Ste. Anne band of Indians, and Stud had been sent in to the fort on a routine matter of licenses. Some furtive remarks overheard, a sly gesture not intended to be seen, had prompted the constable to stay and listen.

Stud, now ending his second year of service, was rapidly maturing. His strength had become power, his eagerness the ability to reason. The once haphazard life of the Ottawa lounger had long ago been thrown into orderliness by discipline; the very straightness of his back showed the difference. But one characteristic of his other days remained: Stud still felt his way slowly among new faces. He knew that this caution came from lack of assurance. To others it was an attractive modesty.

His wide, steady eyes, the nose still bearing the memory of a fight, that mouth, good-natured but not weak, that way of walking which had a touch of swagger still when he was in uniform—all these

features were modified and made appealing by the young man's freedom from insistence, his tentativeness. Sergeant Frees liked him for it. It had commended him at Edmonton to his superiors. It had enabled him to adapt himself to the baffling novelties of those first patrols, and of the duties at his first detachment at Grande Prairie. And now it unlatched the doors of the uneasy Indians at Fort Ste. Anne for him. He had not been there two days before Tessa Willow Grouse, the chief's cousin's daughter, felt the compliment of his company, and uniform, and told him what he wanted to know.

In return for these favors, Stud concealed his disgust at Tessa's relatives. The band was in all ways forlorn; it was miserable with every civilized disease. Its great passion, after smuggled drink, was envy of the Burnt Lake band, a week's paddle to the north. The Burnt Lake Indians, Stud was able to gather, had usurped the finest trapping grounds; they were rich and discouragingly strong. They still lived close to the old redeeming ways, with potlaches, medicine-men, and the war-dance. They even harbored, as Tessa whispered with some pride, two uncaught murderers. She also suggested, with malice playing over her eyes, that they would not be rich long. Sicanny Lou had reached them.

The girl, divided between fear of being overheard and love of Stud's buttons, said only enough for the constable to guess the rest. He definitely discovered that Sicanny Lou was an unscrupulous trader whose dealings, helped on by illicit brews more potent than the liquor of which they were an imitation, impover-

ished all whom he visited. Stud found that he had picked Dominion Day as the excuse for a party of ill consequence to the Burnt Lakers and adjoining bands. Habit would complete their ruin. Dominion Day was five days off, while Burnt Lake was seven—by canoe. Stud reached the detachment for breakfast, his eagerness glowing from him.

"Confound it!" said Frees to Ralstead and Stud over their meal. "The worst day of the year. The inspector's coming to talk over the Kitwancool affair, which won't wait two weeks, till I return. Can you two handle it?"

"Sure," said Ralstead. "Can't we, Stud?" Stud nodded.

"I can get Beek to run you in."

"Beek?" and Ralstead's voice conveyed his objection perfectly. The magistrate was known for a spineless fool.

"You needn't say it," cut in Frees. "I know. But a J. P. on the spot will save you distance and trouble. And the *Laura's* the only boat fast enough to get you there."

"That's right," agreed Stud. "Tessa said that the Burnt Lakers were keeping watch, boasting that no one could surprise them. They've a spy, a lookout at the fort."

"Tessa's a dear," said the sergeant, grinning.

"Not unless you've got a cold in the head," said Stud, quickly.

"The next time you catch cold, Stud," remarked Ralstead, gravely, "we'll send you in for more in-

formation. . . . Do you think, Sarge, that you can induce Beek to go?"

"Beek will go. He'll object, of course; that's Beek. But he'll object less to running his head into the Burnt Lake hornet's nest than to losing his job. A yellow streak runs both ways."

This was true, and Nestor Beek, when seen and objecting, was not dense to the same fact. He was a lean, sallow man, never quite shaven, with eyes like those of some scared little animal driven from its food. He had brought pull to Oolichan, and though possibly the last word in political abasement, he retrieved himself in the eyes of the place by owning the fastest speed boat. He loved the *Laura* and would allow no other hand on her throttle.

And now, during the glittering air-clear morning of June, Stud had envied him his ownership. As he watched headland after headland draw to them, glide by, and fall behind, his fingers curved in imaginary possession of the wheel. He wished that they were off for weeks, for thousands of miles. All his father's blood was reawakened. He felt as if his capacity for going on and on was infinite. He had long since volunteered to go North; now his longing to join Murison on Baffin Island leaped up in him. It was a happy lust, because faithful to his nature. The sun fell on his hatless head with a touch that reached his heart, the mountain wind troubled his spirit. Stud was joyous.

Beek's mind was less pleasurably engaged. "Last fall," he reminded the Policemen, "there was bad

goings-on. There was two prospectors hunted out of Burnt Lake at the point of guns. That band's a caution, and I don't trust 'em."

"They're all right if treated properly," said Ralstead. "Didn't the Hudson's Bay manager send out for his sister to spend the summer with him?"

"The Company is different."

"We intend to be just as sacred," laughed Ralstead, soundlessly, not at Beek's remark but at the long-faced magistrate. He made a figure, the corporal thought, which could never be tragic, even while being scalped. That was tragedy indeed.

The sun reached the peak of its promise and began to decline. They passed from the empty reaches of one lake into another, gliding constantly closer to the sultry blue of the Firepan Mountains. Stud's one diversion was to fix his eyes on some bluish point ahead, watch it focus into a wooded rise and rocky shore, and scan the water-line eagerly for moose, or deer, or anything alive. But loneliness seemed the one inhabitant of the land. The point would pass and be swallowed in the dazzle of the waves astern without disclosing a creature.

He wished Beek wouldn't talk. The slight vibration of the boat tuned in with the pulse of anticipation in his mind. This thrill of setting eye and foot on places never before distinct to man had been his dream even before Regina. The question of what lay behind the ranges charmed him, a question never broken off by any answer. They were already abreast of the Firepan Mountains, the higher Ominecas opened before. This was indeed reward for that long

training; the great wandering service of which he was a member was gratifying his uninterrupted passion at last. . . . Would Beek never stop his stories!

The declining sun floated behind a serrated edge of gray-blue range, and with the shadow came the first premonition that this journey was not to be all shadowless pleasure. The shores closed in upon them now, forming Middle River, and the hour, or the persistent whisper of the wind in the trees, threw Stud's thoughts ahead. It was quite possible that he and Ralstead might not return so smoothly, might even not return. Not that, his thought corrected; yet just that—one chance in several. Tessa had been quite explicit. With Indians much happened in causeless anger, more in drink. How could these wilderness savages, to whom life was a burden of winter and of starvation, value it as he, Peter Whaley, young, strong, and of riotous blood, valued it?

His thoughts were dispersed by supper. There was only one thing to fear, the one apprehension that he who had already undertaken so many new duties, always felt at the approach of another—the fear of not doing all he ought. Thank Heaven it was Ralstead who was with him! From that crucial moment in the barrack-room when Ralstead had put his hand on Stud's shoulder, the boy had liked him. Ralstead was the very flesh and form of reliability, a man solemnly untalkative except when he had something to say. He had hardly opened his mouth since they started. But then, Beek had been enough to make talk objectionable.

"I hope you haven't forgotten your red coats," he said.

They had not forgotten them, they assured him.

"But why did you fellows bring only the one rifle?"

"Don't get goose pimples till this time to-morrow," advised Stud.

"Maybe you mean that for a joke," said Beek. "You don't realize. They're sharpshooters, they are. You don't realize anything, and so you bring one rifle. Suppose it gets broken, what?"

"Get the war out of your head," said Ralstead. "The rifle's a part of the uniform, a concession to the scenery. Did you think we were going to use it?"

"I wish I hadn't come," said Beek. "You don't realize anything. Why, when Burnt Bear came down last winter, he boasted no white man could meddle with them, and he had a rifle with him. He patted it. I saw him. He patted it and said, 'I got good friend here.' "

They anchored across the channel, to obstruct any taker of news, and spread their blankets on the *Laura's* floor. Beek indulged in one or two gloomy prophecies and began to snore.

"He gets on my neck," whispered Stud to the corporal as they lay looking up at the summer stars. "How's a fellow live if he keeps feeling his feelings all the time?"

"It isn't living. The poor coward invents more dangers than his worst enemy could wish on him. He likes himself too much."

"Handsome likes himself, but he's no coward."

"He would've been as a civilian. That's where the outfit was good for him. It's something he has to work for first, before himself. But Beek here, he can't see anything but his own hide, and naturally he's afraid. . . . Let's get some sleep."

Stud could not sleep. The water slapped the side of the boat with little empty smacks, and as she swung slowly he could see a fringe of the black forest, now on one side, now on the other, mysterious and calm. He wished he could be as calm as that. Ralstead was already asleep; a self-controlled man. Had the early men of the outfit been more the man than Ralstead? Stud doubted it. He recalled the canteen disputes. How could there be a dispute? If a man was equal to the emergency, what more could be asked? . . . Stud's eyes glimmered open from time to time, but he was surprised at the last when morning, gliding panther-like down the forest channel, woke him with a sharp paw-stroke of yellow sun. It was *the* day, Dominion Day.

All forenoon, all afternoon the *Laura* pushed farther into the silent land and, as the sun again disappeared, neared the western shore of Burnt Lake. A sickliness of pallid cloud had spread up from the south, dimming the blue, turning all things shadowless and uncanny, and finally throwing a tight cover over the day in which the men stewed as if at the bottom of some great fireless cooker. Stud welcomed the last wooded point, behind which Beek said lay the Hudson's Bay post and, if rumor was right, the scene of Sicanny Lou's operations. They drew into a cove to reconnoiter.

Creeping around the point, the two Policemen observed that smoke was rising from fires along the distant shore. People the size of dogs were moving about. It would be impossible to approach by water before dark, and watch would likely be kept. To skirt the shore on foot would be equally hopeless, owing to rocks.

"That leaves cutting across through the neck of woods," said Ralstead. "If the three of us could surprise them from the rear, it would give us a big advantage. Of course a mile and a half through that bush, in the dark, will be no joke."

"We can wrap up our serges and carry them," said Stud, on whom the necessity of looking smart had been deeply impressed.

Beek raised immediate objections, and finding that they hindered the Policemen's preparations not at all, struck.

"I've bought you fellows where you asked to be brought, haven't I? And I'll judge the cases tomorrow. Gladly. It's what I get paid for. But nobody pays me to be a Mounted Policeman, spending the night lost in that bush, or charging crazy-drunk Indians. Nobody could pay me. No, sir. I know my work, but it ain't that."

Stud did not like to look at him, the small animal snarling, although what he said was of course true. As they talked the green gloom of the forest lost color and looked formidable. Ralstead saw that there was no use in coercing plain funk, and motioned Stud to follow. When they were well away he said:

"*There's* a cure for nerves if we needed one."

"That chap ought to live in the slums and not in the woods," said Stud. "When he was whining like that I wanted to lean against him with my fist."

"He held on to our rifle, though."

What had been twilight on the lake was dead night thirty feet in, and a thickness of darkness beyond.

"Going blind's like this, I guess," said Stud, pushing a fern from his face.

They progressed with continuously more difficulty. Stud had erroneously supposed that forests were composed of trees, with avenues, walking-space, between. But not this forest. Trees there were, thick, rough-barked, endless, disappearing into the midnight overhead. But trees were only the skeleton of its form; the flesh was a barricade of living green. They sank in moss to the knees, creepers clutched their legs, their bodies collided with logs, bushes choked them about the neck, and into their faces switched a smother of twig and leaf.

Stud clawed web from his cheeks and eyes; the forest came into his mouth; the very air strangled his thoughts. Ralstead's electric torch hardly penetrated the overburdened atmosphere. They felt their way in a dense green softness which had only to close a little more to hold them forever. But they kept on until the black iridescence of swamp water stopped all progress. Then they turned.

"He'll have to—" Ralstead spat out cobweb—"he'll have to take us in the boat." Stud, pulling pieces of sticky bark from his undershirt, grunted.

"He'll laugh to see us come back," said Stud, "but I don't care."

"That's true," said the older man. "I didn't suppose any one could make so little difference."

Beek held the rifle on them as they emerged, until he was very sure. He had heard noises, he said, and was worried. He asked them to listen, but they could not hear much for the mosquitoes. Not a ripple, not a motion of air disturbed the murky weight of night, when suddenly their ears caught it—a low drumming, a somber wave of sound, swelling and sinking beyond the forest, an emptiness at its core more wild and moving than music.

Stud's heart beat to the rhythm of that savage unrest. Tessa Willow Grouse had spoken the truth, then; Stud had not believed the stories. He glanced at his superior, but Ralstead's nearly invisible features did not show if his nerves were throbbing, too.

Ralstead ordered the boat to start, but the magistrate-engineer's voice squeaked in refusal:

"Now? Oh, no! no! We'll wait till light . . . till dawn . . . only two hours. It's madness now. They'll be drunk, wild, I tell you. They'll shoot. They've said they would. They'll kill you and then they'll kill me for bringing you. They'll think I'm a Policeman. They won't believe me. They *want* trouble!"

Stud was amazed at such a flow of sound, and ashamed. In the spurt of Ralstead's match he saw Beek's little eyes, glazed with fright.

"Sit up in the bow and steer, Stud," Ralstead said, "and I'll run her."

But that probed Beek in his sense of ownership. He would not allow any one else to touch his engine. Ralstead whispered a threat; Beek gave in. As they rounded the point, Stud saw the glow of a great fire far off.

Nothing in Stud's life had compared with the excitement of this approach. The wheel was grateful to his hand. The light flowed and ebbed as the big bonfire tossed or fell. Nearer, figures stood out raggedly against the light. Nearer still, the dancers took form, bending, their feet stamping. The light made a cave of life in the dead blackness roundabout, and the figures seemed dancing in the flame.

As the bow of the *Laura* was about to enter the shining water, Stud fancied that the light must be on them, must illumine his face. They were running on slow engine. Why didn't Ralstead give the order? The noise swelled, drowned their quiet engine. Fifty yards from the shore . . . forty. At twenty-five, Stud heard Ralstead's calm voice:

"Now, Beek, full speed ahead. . . . As we rush 'em, you turn on the search-light."

Stud felt the hair stir at the edges of his Stetson. This was living. Why didn't that fool speed up?

But the brilliant engineer, instead of getting the *Laura* into high, had stalled her. They were drifting. Stud heard Ralstead curse quietly. At any instant they might be observed, frustrated. A scrape on the bottom sent the sweat out on his body. He felt Ralstead's hand on his shoulder:

"It's not deep. Over we go. Keep your arms dry."

They waded to the shore. The air was filled with the roar of the fire, the monotonous drumming, the dancers' shouts.

"Keep your eye peeled for the trader," ordered Ralstead, "and don't draw."

A hundred yards of small bush intervened, uphill. They stumbled as they walked, cursing Beek for not having the spot-light on. Halfway and they were seen.

"Steady, old man, just walk," said Ralstead.

Suddenly the ground they walked on turned milk-white. The spot-light at last! Shouts from the dancers. The dance had stopped. Stud wished he had more wind. The row had quieted dead as the dancers watched these two strange figures in scarlet walk toward them unconcernedly on a burst of snowy brilliance.

"Shamoganis!" they cried. *"Shamoganis!"*

Stud did not understand. It required all his attention not to stumble, and to keep pace with his corporal. At any moment, absolutely at any moment, they might be shot. His mind was dulled. He was breathless. His heart beat against his uniform. Caused by the hill, he was sure, not alarm. In whatever attack . . . he and Ralstead . . .

His groping thought was drowned in new cries. They were near now. He saw vague forms running, women, and men staggering off. He saw the light on backs, figures vanishing in gloom. Some he made out diving into tents, leaping up on a dim porch and disappearing. One dark form tripped and Stud

gulped out a laugh. He knew he shouldn't be laughing.

"Did you see 'em duck away?" he gasped out to Ralstead. "Like scared cats . . . " In his relief he wanted to guffaw.

"Too easy," panted Ralstead. "They'll get together somewhere. We'll search the cabin first."

It was a rough shack with the sign "Burnt Lake Dance Hall. Step on it Kid"—the evidence of a cheap civilization's inroads.

"We're hot," said Ralstead as he pushed open the door. Stud pressed close after. A dull lamp, sprayed on by a continuous round of insects, showed drunken forms prostrate along the wall. Calls and loud imprecations came from the back recesses of the shack, and they almost bumped into a small man, pockmarked and sullen, a hat over his left eyebrow.

"What you do here?" he asked roughly.

"We ask you the same, Sicanny Lou," said Ralstead. "Not good," and he pointed to the drunken forms. "What you do here?"

The man pointed with his toe to a pile of furs. "Me buy."

"From them?" and Ralstead nodded toward the drunken sleepers, at the same time indicating to Stud a large meat-safe on the wall. Stud, went over to examine it. Sicanny Lou reached the safe in three leaps. Stud had the door open, Lou slammed it shut, pulling down Stud's arms, looking as if he wanted to tear the scarlet cloth with his teeth. Stud shook him off and held him away, while Ralstead investigated,

finding a huge vessel, covered with a dirty blanket, filled with brew.

"Against the law, Lou," said Ralstead. "I place you under arrest."

At the words, Sicanny Lou broke from Stud's hold and ran to the window, imploring help, calling on Burnt Bear to rescue him, to shoot the *shamoganis*, since there were only two. Ralstead had him handcuffed, but none too soon, for they heard voices; evidently heads were being put together. Excited babbling came to the Policemen's ears, stealthy footsteps under the window. By holding part of the blanket over Lou's mouth, Stud stopped the man's effort to stir the Indians. Ralstead was investigating other vessels, hidden by hastily contrived covers, and containing mash and liquor. There was a sound of something hitting the wall opposite the window. A stone fell to the floor, a shower of stones, a few finding their way in. One broke a pane of glass and Stud was cut slightly on the cheek.

"The curs! I'll stop that!" Ralstead, for the first time in Stud's observation, was angry. "Stand away from the light. No! I'll do one better," and with two strides he had put out the sickly lamp. Stud heard, after another patter of stones, the sounds of running.

"Hold your man, Stud," ordered Ralstead. "We'll use this place for a jail. I'll be back shortly," and the door slammed. The corporal was gone.

It was the signal for the trader to struggle. Stud found himself clasping a frenzy of oaths in human shape, but the handcuffs permitted little, and in

a few minutes Lou gave it up. Stud noticed that the sky outdoors was graying. Occasionally the dying fire shot a flicker of light on the under side of trees. The constable pushed Sicanny Lou behind his own store counter as Ralstead appeared with two Indians, out of breath.

"These are good Indians," said the corporal, winking. "Just look after them," and he was gone.

Not until the sun was well up and his task had degenerated into the tiresome commonplace of guarding twenty-three disarmed prisoners, did Stud mind the danger he had been in. Then the fear of it came over him. He felt it as one feels a wound unnoticed in the getting. He wondered why by onslaught, by rifle-shot from the dark, by fire, they had not done away with him and Ralstead. The risk taken now appalled him.

But it was over. The sun had changed all that, revealing the uniform and the dour constable in it. The sun showed, too, Indians in every attitude of dumb immobility accentuated by headache, a sick crowd. But its cruelest revelation was Sicanny Lou, a man pretty well done for by his ancestors before he began life, and now worn to no importance at all by being caught. Stud wondered whence had come his capacity for mischief among wiser Indians.

Ralstead brought coffee. "With the compliments of the Bay manager's sister. She told me that they were up all night praying for the Police to come." He looked over the prisoners. "You'll have to hold

out a while longer. I haven't located all the evidence yet. They've had white advisers."

"How's our magistrate?" asked Stud, smiling. "Still there?"

"Oh, my yes! He's up at the Hudson's Bay store, explaining to the manager how his search-light really did the trick."

Stud commented adversely on Mr. Beek.

Ten o'clock came, the hour at which court was to be held in the company's store. The prisoners were herded over into a shed near by, whence Stud issued them, one at a time, as their names were called. The Indian asked for, looking very sheepish now, would walk between the two lines of women, staring children, and unarrested men, and enter the dread court. There, before Beek, thinking all the world of himself, Ralstead as prosecutor tried the cases. The magistrate pronounced fines ranging from five to fifty dollars and costs.

With the morning gone and only half of the thirty prisoners yet tried, the dignity of the affair was succumbing to tedium. Familiarity with even this august ceremony ran to secret whispers and half-smiles among the younger bloods. Stud had grown excessively weary. To keep his constabular spine erect was becoming an achievement of character. He knew that his character would not cover his temper much longer. Inwardly he was anxious to kill somebody; outwardly he remained the impeccable Constable Whaley, until a young buck named Williams was called.

Williams started down the line, then stopped, and

picking up a handful of stones, began to shy them into the lake. Stud ordered him on. He stood still, a pillar of impudence. Stud felt temper creeping up his spine. He strode down the lines toward Williams and as he went he noted the sudden lighting of malice in the dark faces. Was it going to be serious, after all? Would they resist now? A flash of the consequences went over him. One explosion of resistance could undo all the work, rock their success, even menace their safety.

Stud was nearing the balky Indian, who stooped for another handful of stones. Stud, taking a running kick at the part Williams usually sat on, spread-eagled the surprised savage. The Indian rose, furious, stone in hand. But Stud was ready, waiting with clenched fist. There was no need to apply it. . . . And after that there were no further disturbances.

We stayed there two nights more [said Stud in a letter to Alec], and then brought Sicanny Lou back with us. He opened up and was real interesting. He knew Gun-a-noot, the murderer who lived in these mountains for thirteen years before he got tired of it and gave himself up. These Indians are the best I've seen anywhere, all big fellows, husky, and they have lots of money. The Burnt Lake band was so lawless that the corporal and I heard we were taking our lives in our hands to go in. And once or twice it did look as if things might turn a bit lively. But I guess I've been writing reports too long to make it out as exciting as that last tennis match you wrote me about. I don't know much about games, and maybe charging a crowd of drunken savages at 3 A.M. doesn't come under that head; but believe me, Alec, as a sport I should say it would take a lot of beating.

CHAPTER XIV

Extracts from G. O.'s

No. 6428

The following promotion to date, 1-6-25, to be corporal:

Reg. No. —— Const. Ivry, Alan, of "N" Div'n.

No. 6431

The undermentioned, having been discharged, is struck off the strength of the Force on 3-6-25:

Pensioned

Reg. No. —— Sergt. Head, B. G., of "Depot" Div'n.

No. 6432

The following appointment to date on 3-6-25:

Reg. No. —— Sergt. Sellers, S., to have the rank and draw the pay of Staff Sergeant while employed as Chief Detective at Montreal.

CHAPTER XV

The Fifty-Cent Mystery

THE White Angel Pool-room was easily Montreal's finest nursery and rest home for lawbreakers. Not only was it happily situated to accommodate the idlers from the great cosmopolitan docks, but it also attracted the cleverest rowdies who haunt the darkness behind the St. Lawrence Boulevard. Here Detective-Corporal Ivry found it both helpful and amusing to come occasionally and indulge himself, when tired or wanting entertainment, very much as the fatigued business man turns on his radio.

For Ivry's entertainment was drawn from his work. Anything that advanced his abilities was of consuming interest to the man, now twenty-eight but still the lean, sharp-tongued, sensitively poised Ivry who had once delighted to drive the blunt-headed canteen sergeant to cover. Since he had been able to throw all his energy and time into the detective channels of Mounted Police work, Ivry had broadened, largely from being more interested in life, more contented, less driven in upon himself. He was also more valuable.

At the White Angel his company varied from pickpockets to hotel thieves, card experts, or drug-peddlers. He won the confidence of the sheik mem-

bers of gangs, juvenile housebreakers, second-story men, bootleg agents. He would smile to himself as he realized that his companions in a pool game might be a con man, a politician, and a "fence," and he could talk with each in his own tongue. He—but only if pressed—admitted that he was a chauffeur. One of his private extravagances had been a Maroon Line Taxi suit.

But he was in plain clothes and rather tired on the July night that he had turned into this haunt of collective criminal effort for some cigarettes and a rest before going back to barracks. The barracks, especially since Staff-Sergeant Sellers had come, were no resting-place. The air was saturated with activity, all the more deadly because so quiet. Sellers bred an interest in cases which pervaded his men. It was impossible not to take on the zeal of one's surroundings.

As Ivry slumped back into one of the White Angel chairs, he noticed a heavy, bushy-haired French Canadian boy of nineteen or twenty playing pool with an open-faced English chap of not over seventeen; and almost against the detective's will his interest was aroused by the curious combination. He thought he had never seen two more strikingly ill-assorted youths. He moved closer. It became obvious from the younger boy's talk that he was out of his element and was trying to be tough. It became equally obvious that he would soon succeed, even more radically than he desired, if he ran long with the other, who with his weak mouth, sullen eyes, and loose conversation was not healthy company for

any boy. Ivry determined to warn the youngster that one cannot rub shoulders with smut without some of the black coming off. In ten minutes, by artful gradations of approach, he had got into the game.

It was, unfortunately, so late that Ivry had only found out that the swarthy one was named Virile—pronounced Veer-eel—and the other, Kid, when the boys decided to go home. Ivry had won sixty cents from Virile and it struck him that Virile paid up with a better grace than was to be expected. He decided to follow and drop a word of counsel to Kid, however, and while waiting for the boys to get a start, bought some more cigarettes. He was about to spend the fifty-cent piece just got from Virile, when he noticed that it looked whiter than normal. A moment's inspection showed it to be bad stuff. He had now two reasons for following the pair.

Hardly ninety seconds had elapsed, yet they had vanished. To a civilian such a hitch at the start would have proved a balk, but Ivry had trained himself to expertness in shadowing. "It's first a matter of self-control," Sellers had told him, "and then of choosing human probabilities. But you can do nothing until you lose consciousness of yourself." And Ivry had begun in that way, by accustoming himself to be and think and act as John Mick the contented news-dealer, or Jim Mick the ambitious hotel doorman, or Jack Mick the gay messenger boy.

Almost instinctively now he dropped his Mounted Police niceties of psychology and became a chap who would stroll the streets for an evening's cooling, with

collar off and shirt turned in at the neck. Nor did it take him much longer to guess where the boys had gone. The dark lumbering one, he argued, would not walk fast; it was hardly likely that they had turned down into alleys and courts; they could not simply have "disappeared,"—the civilian's usual diagnosis,—hence they had probably vanished in the very plausible direction of some eating-joint, of which there were several on the street. Ivry discovered them in the first, the Town-End Café, a resort even less hygienic for youngsters than the White Angel.

This gave him at least ten minutes, he calculated, and he determined to communicate with Headquarters. "It's what we're for," Sellers impressed on his men. "You fellows get the idea out of your heads that you're to be star detectives, young Sherlocks playing a lone hand. You belong to an organization. Two minds are better than one, and ten than two—if they'd give us ten. Anyway, grasp this fact: this central office is your best friend; and work together."

Ivry wasted some time hunting a telephone he dared use, but he found Sellers able to give him a man who taxied to the neighborhood in time. When the pair came from the café and separated, Ivry followed Virile to a house at 152 Section Street. After waiting until the light that had flickered up in an upper room was extinguished, Ivry decided that this must be Virile's home, and left.

The little clock at the McGill University entrance was chiming 2:15 as Ivry walked into the barracks. He was not surprised at seeing a light in Staff-Ser-

geant Sellers's office. The time and ambitions of this N. C. O. were involved in the work of criminal investigation. Like all Mounted Police detachments, that at Montreal was short-handed. Its workers were conscious of the deep sea of crime, the flood of evil drugs, the efforts of a continent to pass bad money, the violations of a people's safety, all the worse because invisible.

It irked men of enterprise like Sellers to know of this sea and be able only to reduce its tides. Hampered by the restrictions of their activities to a few sorts of crime, those against Federal statutes, he was deprived of the sources of information open to the city police. But he did much, with a hopeful energy, holding the reins of all cases, dovetailing the facts as they were brought in, planning the arrests, and if these were likely to be dangerous, leading them.

Though Ivry's admirations were few, he admired Sellers. Not only did he admire the staff-sergeant's brains; their views were congenial. Both had that love for the Force which permits itself acid criticism. They knew its past, they had faith in its future, they were caustic about its present. Both were emphatic in believing that neither their superiors nor the lawmakers had sufficiently studied the trend of the times; they ridiculed the he-man traditions which blinded many to transformed conditions. They protested, over many a glass of ale, that dog-driving in remote regions would never maintain the Force's life as it should be. But though professionally frightful egotists, as some of their views had earned the

title for them, they worked with a persistence and devotion that accomplished marvels with small means.

"Can I see you a minute?" asked Ivry. "I think I've located my man's home."

"I told Adams not to wait up," said Sellers. "He shadowed the boy to Curbin Avenue, a very respectable sort of house, he says, owned, as we find, by an importer named Smith."

"A helpful name."

"In the morning we'll find out more about his family. Now tell me why you dig up extra trouble for us in the dead of night when you know we can't take on a thing more?"

Ivry, assured of Sellers' satisfaction by his grousing, told his story once, uninterrupted, and then virtually told it again in answer to the staff-sergeant's questions. Ivry's description of Kid seemed to interest Sellers more than the rather normal act of a well-bred youth, who was doing a little slumming on his own hook, warranted.

Finally Sellers said: "The best thing about you, Ivry, is your darned suspicious nature, and I forgive you. Go ahead, dig up as many brats as you can, pile on the work; some day you may light on something worth while. But you aren't the only person to load straws on this camel. And, by the way, have you a cigarette?"

"What do you mean?" asked Ivry.

"Well, this afternoon the Exchange Bank telephoned that they had been handed a raised bill, a dollar bill raised to one hundred, and wanted to

know what we were going to do about it. It's a fright. We've got those counterfeit tens at Three Rivers to follow up; the chief wants us to keep after that rogue of a Spanish consul, and so do I; and here starts a new story. We've got to take on another man."

"You don't need me to-morrow."

"Why start something you can't finish? You go to court the next day, and there's the raid on that island. I've been trying to think of somebody we know, somebody I'll not have to train."

"There's Chase," said Ivry, "Alec Chase. He was a special for us in that last business at Windsor, the Bow-legged Bess case. I got to know him then. A good man, Staff."

"Where'd he train?"

"In Detroit. He had an uncle or a cousin in the American secret service and he's made a specialty of Chinks."

"A man that knows dope might not be much good for us just now."

"I think you'd find that he'll win your confidence very quickly, Staff."

"He's American?"

"No, from Ottawa. I'm certain that he's Canadian. He's about twenty-three, and very steady. He seemed wrapped up in the work. You'd like him, Staff."

"Do you know how he can be reached?"

"Yes, I correspond with him."

"Why didn't you tell me that at first?" said Sellers, smiling. "I'll wire for permission to take him

on. In that case, you might put in to-morrow looking into this Virile of yours, and I'll see the Exchange Bank. The cashier who 'phoned wasn't much help with his identification. The chap turning in the bill was so nervous that when he was told it was n.g. he skipped before the cashier got a good look at him. At least they kept the bill, which is more than bank tellers used to do in this town. Now, to bed."

Alec arrived in Montreal the next morning but one, having been located in Ottawa where he was combining a vacation with a chance to say good-by to Stud, whose desire was being granted; he was going North. Even Stud, who was not much of a physiognomist, had noticed the change in Alec from the old swimming days on the Rideau. His face was mature, his eyes were more intense, and when he did smile it was with reservations, as if he had seen a little deeper into life than his years would stand.

He was genuinely glad to see Ivry again. "We're drowned in work," said the corporal. "Sometimes it seems as if all the counterfeiters in both countries came here to practise. And as for smuggling, the business men of Canada could save scores of millions a year if they knew more about what was going on. Dope is a flood. We're so limited that we can only spoon the scum from the pan; the whole dirty mess ought to be emptied."

"That's great," said Alec, his eyes lighting. "The more work, the bigger chance for me. Some day you'll have to let me into your exclusive outfit."

"Do you want to stay poor that bad?"

Photo by Sutton

REHEARSING THE MUSICAL RIDE

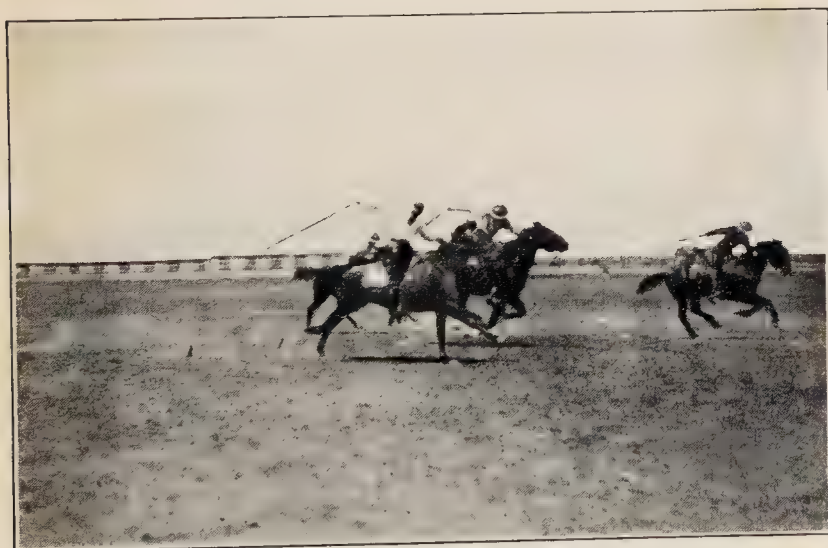


Photo by Sutton

TENT-PEGGING

"I was turned down once."

"I didn't know that," said Ivry, thoughtfully.

"But I'm going to try again. If what Stud says is true—that the Mounted Police are going to have a free hand in the criminal work out West—then I'm going to dynamite my way in."

"It's bound to come," said Ivry. "That's why men like Sellers stick, though hope deferred—you know that story. But about this case, Alec. Your subject lives at either one hundred and fifty or one fifty-two Section Street. He uses both houses. I talked with his mother this morning at one-fifty. His name is Virile Pucet. The dear boy has been out of work for five months, allowing his sisters to support him. He used to have a job in a jewelry shop; I'll give you the address later. You can find out why he left. His mother says he's poor, but he has money for the things he wants. I'm not sure whether she knows what a dog he is or not; she praised him to me while I stood on one foot after the other. I had to listen, also, to what she does, thinks, prays, and eats. It's amazing, isn't it, these old women's generosity with their private affairs, to a stranger?"

"But such a stranger!"

"Just a sympathetic census-checker," said Ivry. "I advise you not to take Virile at his mother's estimate. He's no fool, at least no weak one. A husky, sullen, criminal sort, who I imagine would be a good biter in a fight, but certainly no good as company for the young fellow I mentioned. We think his name is Leroy Smith. I am going to look him up, myself. Staff-Sergeant Sellers is a good head, Alec,

and a pig for work. He can't bear to let that Exchange Bank bill slide. He was sore at the dumb-bell cashier, who couldn't give one distinguishing mark about the boy who passed the note except that he was about to have whiskers; you know, the unshaved fluff of the upper lip. The cashier thought that he could recognize his voice again, but the boy's voice'll be changed and yelling at his own children before he goes near that bank again."

"How am I to keep in touch with you?" asked Alec.

"Come with me now and the inspector will swear you in. Then I'll show you a room we use on Waldo Street. That'll be our rendezvous, and I can report to Sellers. Did you bring any other rig?"

"Wait till you see me in my pink striped shirt," said Alec. "With that, and my locks brilliantined, I'm the flapper's delight."

"You won't delight many flappers on the spending money Staff-Sergeant'll give you," said Ivry.

After seeing the rendezvous Ivry sent off Alec to enjoy Virile's bad company as best he could. It was nearly eleven in the morning when Alec, suitcase in hand, applied for a cheap room at Madame Pucet's, to be told that she had no vacant chamber. Alec was prepared to outdo the census-checker of the day before in sympathy, and soon the old woman remembered the room in her house next door, which she rarely rented, she said, because few liked to sleep in a room without a window. Alec told her that chaps out of work could not be choosers.

"It is that which I tell my son, Virile," she said. "He sleeps next door, too, in the kitchen. But if he will not bring in the money, he must let me have his good room, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

Alec agreed, delighted at hearing that he was to sleep in the same house as Virile after all. Nor had Madame left him long in his cheerless den before he guessed from sounds that Virile was just arising. It was only natural for a man who has used his last match to grope about until he should find somebody to borrow from, and only courtesy to proffer a cigarette in exchange, finally arriving at questions, as between man and man, of interest to one who brilliantines his hair.

With such a start Alec found acquaintance traveling toward confidences, confidences solidifying into confidence, at the rate he deemed wise. If Virile thought it curious that a man in good health should employ another to carry in his dinner and his supper, he asked no questions, but gladly pocketed the money. Virile was allowed to discover, even without questions, that Alec was waiting for a pal, a man with money, mysterious money. On the whole, it was a creditable day's work.

Next day it rained, and Alec seemed to Virile to have regretted talking. In fact, Virile was told, rather petulantly, to forget it. This pal, it seemed, had a temper one could not rely on. Little things upset him. Alec showed Virile a letter from him, a letter written in bad humor, clearly. Alec should not have talked.

"Nothing makes me talk," said Virile.

"That's what I like about you. I can see you're all there."

"You've said it. Nothing makes me talk."

"But squealers is one worse than talkers," said Alec.

"That's right, too. I hate squealers. I'd croak a guy that squealed on me. I'd sure croak him."

"I'd hate to run up against you, Virile," said Alec, quite sincerely, as he looked at the other's shoulders and arms. "I'd hate to run up against anybody. Something's got my nerve."

It all interested Virile. A man must have a weak nerve, he reflected, if he's afraid to go out to eat. Still, he couldn't kick so long as Alec paid him a quarter every time he brought in food. Alec seemed to like a room without windows; no one could spot you. Of course the light wasn't too good for reading. So, on the second day, Virile let Alec stretch out on his bed to read his detective tales. Sometimes points came up for discussion. It was about this time that Alec let fall what was on his mind. He and his pal wanted an introducer, somebody who knew uptown Montreal. They didn't want to work fast, but sure. See?

That evening Alec telephoned to Ivry for a meeting.

"He's busy at something secret," said Alec, "upstairs. I read those sloppy detective stories for hours and finally he stole upstairs. He was gone three hours. I fancied plaster of Paris on his hands when he came back. I've the young crook's interest, but

I want to cinch his confidence. Did you bring the raised bill?"

"Sellers thinks it's dangerous to use that. I brought one of the tens in the case we're working on. It's irregular, but we've got the numbers. Tinker on it if you want, but don't pass it."

"I'm not a goop."

"Does your friend Virile mention his work?"

"He's still sounding me out. And now, what about the boy?"

"His name is Leroy Smith and he's just the average kid with a couple of tastes he's not mentioning to Father—pool and beer. I'd bet a hand he knows nothing about Virile's phony coin or any other. He's just a kid who's keen to see around new corners in life."

"Well, he doesn't want to go around them," said Alec; "at least not hand in hand with Virile."

"I'm glad we can warn him when the time comes."

"Did anything turn up at the banks?"

"Not a bill. We checked up for raised notes and bad silver. We found three more bad fifty-cent pieces, one at that Town-End Café where Virile ate that night. But none at the tram offices. He evidently doesn't use the trolley."

"I think I'll have news for you to-morrow," said Alec.

That evening seemed long to Alec, sitting up in his windowless room and waiting for Virile to come in. Sometimes he was oppressed by the miasmatic atmosphere of deception he was forced to breathe. He had just been arguing at Ottawa with Stud and

Murison about that, however. Murison, the older man on furlough from the North, and trained to patrol in cityless regions, had got into some heat at the discussion. He announced that he would rather leave the outfit than be made to resort to mean and spying practices. Alec asked him if he thought it was wrong to uncover the evil designs of crooks on innocent people. Murison replied that he did not believe in uncovering deceit by worse deceit.

Alec had inquired if Murison believed it wrong to be a public accountant. The accountant detected errors on paper; the detective did the same in life. The detective audited character. He observed the hidden influences working upon the people. It could not be done in a scarlet uniform. Murison granted that. Then if one did not proclaim oneself in scarlet, why not go the whole hog and be successfully secret? asked Alec. Didn't one have to trap rats with their own bait? Murison, of course, was not moved by Alec's arguments, and it was Stud who, while sharing both views, had to stop the discussion.

"A good man has nothing to fear, has he?" he said. "And I don't see that the others have any kick if they get found out. And they don't kick, either. Not unless they're framed to something they haven't done. And we don't do that. If they're satisfied, Murison, you ought to be. Let's go over to Hull and drink their healths."

It was after midnight that Virile came in and fell into the trap. Alec's door was ajar, showing the light. Virile looked in. Alec swore at him vigorously for not knocking, concealing a ten-dollar-bill which

he was raising—with so deliberate a haste, however, that Virile could not help seeing. Then, as if nervously changing the subject, Alec said:

"I heard from my pal, to-day."

"I guess that makes you feel pretty smooth."

"And you, too, perhaps."

"How do you mean me?"

"If I was to pay for a piece of news, could you keep your teeth closed?"

"Wasn't I telling you how I hate squealers? I'm no squealer, if a man pays me good. How much is it worth?"

"That depends on how good the answer is. Listen, Virile: I'm not exactly what you think I am."

Virile's eyes went half closed. "I guess I know that. Didn't I fall to that the first day you was hanging around?"

"Well, I'm lucky to have run into you, Virile. Now, if you can come across with the kind of chap we want—"

"What'll I get out of it?"

"Say, bo, you're thinking backwards."

"I've got to know what I'm going to get, don't I?"

"So do we, don't we? Now listen. Who do you know that's there? We want some real swell top who knows his Montreal. He doesn't have to be any older than you, if he's got as good a bean."

"I don't know no one like that," said Virile, sullenly.

"You'll be taken care of." Alec's spirits were flattening.

"I don't know no swells. How'm I to pick up with any swells?"

"Wherever you go there are swells. You can't get away from them."

"I don't know none."

Alec swallowed his disappointment. "That's bad news, Virile. I sized you up wrong, I guess. I don't often make a break like that. But forget it." And he began to undress. "Just forget it all, kid."

Virile was clearly uncomfortable. "What do you mean, sized me up wrong?"

"Forget it, I said. It's pretty late, too."

"Say," ventured Virile, "I met one swell. He's just a kid, though. But he's like what you said."

Alec yawned as if this was the stupidest moment of all time. "A kid can't hold his trap shut."

"This kid can," said Virile, and stopped. Alec could see that he was deciding something. Alec played with his shoe-laces until Virile blurted out, "Say, if I show you something, can you keep it under your hat?"

"That's only swapping even."

Virile went stealthily upstairs, returning with a die for a fifty-cent piece. "Did you guess I was working on that all the times you was reading?"

"You flatter me, Virile," and Alec examined the die, with no apparent enthusiasm. "I'm no mind-reader yet."

"Maybe you can fix it," said Virile. "It ain't right."

Alec handed it back. "That's not our game. My

pal used to muss around with it before he hit something bigger. Have you a heavy pressure-press?"

Virile shook his head.

"What's your mold?—steel?"

"Solder."

Alec looked at the die again. "I don't mind showing this to my pal. Maybe I could show it to him to-morrow morning. And how about you seeing your swell kid? Without telling him anything, that is. I'd want to look him over first. This is no little fifty-cent game. You might make a date with him, eh? Some café or pool-room, and I could look him over, and if I liked his looks I could get my pal to see him. He'd have to do the talking. But you've got to have a heavy-pressure press. My pal'll know."

Before Alec turned in he broke his flashy scarf-pin with some care.

Next morning they started out on their separate errands, but Alec did not get far with the die. Changing his straw hat for a felt, he established himself in a taxi near the corner where Virile would take the trolley, following his black bird to a tobacco shop on Curbin Street where Virile was met by a youth, a fair boy with a loud tie and a smooth face. They talked, and when Virile left, Alec tracked the youngster to the Smith residence. In twenty minutes Alec was talking with Ivry.

"We've got this far," said Alec. "We know that Virile makes and passes the fifty-cent pieces. We exchanged confidences. I've broken a scarf-pin which I'll take upstairs to him this afternoon to mend.

This'll give me an excuse for looking around. But the workshop is there, all right, and we can raid any time. From Virile's former employer I've learned that he was let out for thieving. He's a bad egg. But the connection with Leroy Smith is a puzzler. Have you noticed anything suspicious about the kid?"

"Just one thing," said Ivry.

"So've I."

"What the cashier noticed?'

"Yes," and Ivry passed a finger over his upper lip.

"Of course there must be forty thousand blond boys with beginning mustaches," said Alec.

"But they don't all associate with proven counterfeiters."

"What do you say to this, then?" and Alec discussed his plans for a raid that night.

"Sellers usually likes to be in on a thing like this. I'll give your diagram to him and let you know. Call up at two. That'll give time to get the warrants." He looked out at the window. "Ye gods! It's raining again. A thousand curses!"

"Please don't curse this particular storm," said Alec; "its going to save me hunting heavy pressure-presses all afternoon. By the way, have you marked this die as Exhibit Number One?"

The rain continuing, Alec read more detective stories that afternoon, in Virile's room, until he judged that Virile would be well under way at his work in the top-floor room. He then climbed the stairs, whistling softly, and knocked. Virile stuck out

a frowning face. Counterfeiting was not progressing smoothly, apparently, and he asked Alec what in the name of several decidedly unpleasant things he wanted.

"Nothing," said Alec, "if you feel that way about it. I broke my pin and thought maybe you'd let me use your solder to fix it."

Virile examined it, without asking Alec in, but Alec did not need to go in. Sufficient odor was coming out.

Fortunately the rain had stopped long before nine, when Virile was supposed to produce the swell kid at the White Angel. Then, if Alec thought well of him and judged that he could keep a secret, they were to take the boy to Virile's room and broach business.

Alec found himself liking Leroy Smith for his own sake. He was seventeen, with blue eyes just a shade too light, and a pale fuzz of peach down on lip and cheeks which gave him a look of innocence rather incongruously contrasted with his speech and aspirations.

The boy was, as Ivry had surmised, impatient for life. And his old man, in Leroy's phrase, was strict with his sons. Leroy's elder brother had run away from home on this account, and Leroy corresponded with him secretly. Leroy hoped to run away, too, but running-away funds were low. Later, in Virile's room, the question of funds was brought up, and in this conversation Alec heard references to a plan which Virile and Leroy had matured but which had not worked out. By a skilful delay Alec prolonged

the talk on general levels until he was sure it was nearly ten. Ten was the hour for the raid.

"I guess it's money we're all after, Leroy, and that's what Virile got you up here to talk about. You tell him, Virile, what you know about me."

"Listen, Kid: This chap's a buddy of mine, and he's got a pal who's got the stuff. See? He's a whizz at making it. See? None of this fifty-cent business. Bills. And he's a high-flier, too. He wants to know some of the big birds your old man knows. See?"

"Yeah, I see," said young Smith, blinking.

Alec knew it was ten, or even a minute after, and he hoped that nothing had held up his friends.

"It's this way, Kid," Virile was going on. "We thought maybe you'd like to be in. Nothing dangerous, of course. You wouldn't have to do nothing but just put my friends wise. See?"

"What do you mean . . . put them wise?" asked the boy, his throat working a little for air. This was deeper than he was used to.

"My pal'll explain all that," said Alec. "I expected him here before this."

"You wouldn't have to do nothing much, Kid," said Virile. "And when you'd took in all you wanted, you could clear out."

Alec's ear caught a distant footfall. The boy's eyes were tasting romance at the thought of clearing out. Yes, the steps were definitely approaching.

"Maybe this is my pal," said Alec, and standing by the door he opened it a crack, talking quietly to Virile and Leroy.

In the poor light it was hard to notice all that happened. Sellers knocked, entered.

"Virile," said Alec, "I want you to meet my pal."

Virile shook hands. Sellers held his hand, saying: "Is this Mr. Virile Pucet? Well, Mr. Pucet, I have to inform you that you are under arrest."

At the same time the door opened wider and Ivry appeared. It was the impression created on Virile by this second figure, even more than the sergeant's words, that broke his momentary stupefaction. But he was too late, the handcuffs had clicked. Leroy had risen, and now leaped for the door.

"Let me go . . . let me go . . ." Alec held him firmly but kindly. "Let me go, I say! . . . I haven't done anything."

"We want you to explain something, that's all," said Alec.

"I haven't done anything."

The boy had turned milk-white, and the fluff of light hair on his lip showed dark. Alec's attention was turned to Virile by a struggle.

"I'll get you!" he was shouting at Alec. And with a quick squirm and pull he had jerked closer to Alec, kicking at him, his teeth bared, and his black and venomous eyes spitting hatred. "I'll get you, you squealer. I said what I did to squealers." Ivry and Sellers had him firmly, but his mad rage was terrifying. Alec glanced into the vortex of murder in Virile's eyes. "I said what I did—"

"Whatever you say will be used against you," cautioned Sellers, and in a few minutes Virile's first

paroxysm had been suppressed. Leroy was amenable, though nervous. Out in the hall there was talking, and the sound of people crowding.

"Chase, we'll take the prisoner to barracks and Corporal Ivry will come back for you. Meanwhile, make a note of what's here and in the room upstairs. Then please come back, both of you, as soon as possible. I shall have 'phoned Mr. Smith to come to the barracks, and we'll clear up this other matter."

When the Northern men passed through Montreal on their way to the Arctic, two days later, Alec had twenty minutes with Stud and told him all about it.

"But we got the surprise of the night," said the special constable, "when old man Smith, the kid's dad, walked into barracks. He looked like such a nice old man. He was awfully upset, and we supposed it was because of finding the kid in our company. He didn't know that Leroy had been running the streets, and it naturally griped the old fellow to find that his boy, *his* son, et cetera, et cetera, had been playing around with that black snake of a Virile. The old boy wasn't pleasant to Virile, not really gentlemanly, and Virile hit back."

"Didn't you have him in the cage?" asked Stud.

"Oh, yes. Hit back verbally, I mean. He told Mr. Smith that Leroy would get sent away for a darned sight longer than himself. 'What do you mean?' asked Leroy's dad. 'You know what I mean,' shouted Virile. I put my hand on Mr. Smith's arm to draw him away. I thought Virile would spit at

him, he looked so ugly, and he did; he spat out the raised hundred-dollar-bill business.

"You could've knocked Ivry and me down with a look. We hadn't seriously counted on there being any connection. But—"

"That train's going in a minute," said Stud. "How did it turn out?"

"This is how it was. Virtuous old Mr. Smith is a business man, and one of his rich American clients asked to be put in touch with a reliable bootlegger. Mr. Smith didn't like to say 'No' to the rich client and so accommodated him. The reliable bootlegger was so pleased that he gave Mr. Smith a percentage and skipped, the percentage taking the form of three one-hundred-dollar notes, all raised from ones, total value three dollars. So much for reliable bootleggers.

"Mr. Smith locked the notes up in his desk and young Leroy, who needed some spare cash just then for pool-room bets, went foraging for it, not liking to ask Dad, and found them there. He showed them to Virile, who was educating him in everything below-board, and Virile suggested that he try to cash one at ten minutes before closing time."

"Didn't the poor fool know you couldn't get away with that at a bank?"

"Evidently not. But he soon found out, and skipped."

"What's going to happen to him and his dad?"

"Staff Sellers looked them up. They're O. K. That percentage business was Mr. Smith's one little flier in sin. He'll never forget it, and he's going to

send Leroy to a camp. All the boy needs, to straighten him out, is exercise."

"And the other?"

"Virile? or the bootlegger? Sellers is looking into the raised-note affair, though that's five years old. As for Virile, we found enough acid, tin, and stuff in his room to give him a year anyway. He was just learning. I don't think Virile likes me very much now, but I can't thank him enough, Stud. They're going to take me on. I'm joining up this week."

The train was beginning to move. Stud thrust out his hand and grasped Alec's in congratulation—and farewell.

CHAPTER XVI

Extracts from G. O.'s

No. 6734

The undermentioned, having been engaged at the places and on the dates stated for three years' service, are taken on the strength of the Force, appointed Constables in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and posted to "Depot" Div'n. They will take Reg. Nos. as follows:

Reg. No. —— Sain, L. V., Vancouver, 31-8-25.
Reg. No. —— Chase, A. E., Ottawa, 31-8-25.

No. 6737

The following transfers to date on 31-8-25:

Reg. No. —— Corpl. Murison, H. T., "G" Div'n to Ponds Inlet.
Reg. No. —— Const. Whaley, P., "G" Div'n to Ponds Inlet.

No. 6738

Extra pay at the rate of 50¢ per diem is hereby granted the undermentioned of "E" Div'n for the number of days after their respective names, while employed on special plain clothes duty during the month of August, 1926:

Reg. No. —— Corpl. Lafferty, B. C., 15.
Reg. No. —— Const. Sorley, J. D., 8.

No. 6740

The following promotion to date, 31-8-25, to be Constable:

Reg. No. —— Trumpeter Laronde, P.

No. 6741

The following transfer to date on 1-9-25:

Reg. No. —— Const. Laronde, P., from "Depot" Div'n to "E" Div'n.

CHAPTER XVII

"The Loneliest Man" Patrol

"Ah! Ah!"

At Stud's "Get up!" in Eskimo, which he shouted like a cheer-leader, the dozen Husky dogs shook their manes free from snow, while native hunter Komonee straightened out crossed traces. *"Ah! Ah! Ah! . . . Ah! . . . Ah!"*

The energy in Stud's voice was propeller-like: it threw the dogs' shoulders forward, the fan of struggling flesh spread out, the sled moved, glided down the slope from the detachment door, and gathered momentum as it struck the ice. The dogs' tails went up. Stud, guiding his *komitik,* managed to look back and wave to Dreslar. The constable called good luck. Stud wished that Murison had been there, too, to see him start. But Murison had got off on his patrol the day before.

For a mile the only thought that found passage through Stud's mind was that he had started at last. At last he was away. And the morning had dawned clear, too. Everything was propitious on that twenty-third of March. Stud thought that he had nothing to wish for. He began to wonder if he had forgotten anything. He would have to do without it, then.

To do without it for a thousand miles! For this was a major patrol, a big patrol, out to the ocean, then down the coast, hundreds of miles to Cape Dickinson, half-way down the barren length of Baffin Island. And then back. Stud was nearing the end of his fourth year in the Force, but this was the first major patrol he had been detailed on alone. He had volunteered for it. That was how these serious journeys were arranged; but, then, everybody wanted to get away, to travel. Corporal Murison could hardly wait for the sun, to start his exploration trip.

Murison had asked for Stud at his detachment, partly because Stud and he had been congenial from the first, but principally because Stud had developed that incomprehensible quality which Northern men must have, the thing which responds. Dreslar did not have it. He worked, he was reliable, but he hated the North in his secret heart. He could not respond to the wonders of its reality. He would not have been the man to send on Inspector Enslee's little errand.

Enslee, on his inspection of the summer before, had stopped in at Dawn Bay where lived a solitary trader, Mr. Romer Ledwin. The inspector had been touched by his situation, more touched by it than Mr. Ledwin was, for Enslee could not induce the trader to relinquish his hut and spend a winter at Ponds Inlet in comparative civilization with the Mounted Police. Failing in that, Inspector Enslee requested Murison, whom he was leaving in charge

of the Ponds Inlet detachment, to have an eye to Mr. Romer Ledwin.

Having an eye meant, of course, making a call upon their nearest white neighbor, barring the Hudson's Bay post at the River Arnold, a matter of two months' travel if all went well. If all did not go well, indeed if any one thing went very ill . . . but, being in the very best of health, aged twenty-four, and without a worry, spiritual or financial, Stud drove on, uncaring. He was not one to cross his pressure ridges before he came to them.

It had been a brilliant morning; but as the inlet widened, a half gale set in from the sea. The surface snow began to hiss along the ice, and to rise, obscuring the sun. The day had been mild at first, with a temperature only twenty below. Stud judged it to be more than forty below by three of the afternoon. He could tell by the dogs' suffering in the bleak sweep of wind. This was disappointing. It was always satisfactory to make a good run on the first day; the farther from home, the quieter the dogs. But they were suffering, so Stud ordered Komonee to build an igloo. In forty minutes he had lighted his primus lamp with his establishment neat about him: him, the veteran Northern man.

The realization thrilled him. Lying on his blankets in his underclothes,—for the igloo was warm, the temperature being just sufficiently below freezing to keep the ceiling from melting,—Stud pulled on his pipe and thought, step by step, from that first night's talk in Bowles, through those days in

Depot with Bill, to that great evening when Murison had said, "You must go North." And now he was North, and it surpassed anything Murison had said.

All other life was a hollow sham beside this. Small wonder that pensive Komonee looked so round-faced and happy. Stud, too, basked in the depths of an unexpressed contentment, a contentment which had steadily increased since that day, eight months before, when he and Murison and Dreslar had watched disappear the ship which had brought them to the country. "This hell of a country," Dreslar always said. Stud determined to be fair; this hell-and-heaven of a country, he would admit, but largely heaven.

That had been a moment for you! he reflected; a moment of deep intensity, but all beneath the surface. They had been sitting in their small boat, matching sally for sally with the heavily clothed figures leaning over the *Beothic's* rail, when they heard the sound, the low, solemn sound of her cable as it was drawn in. That touched him deeper than the scream of her siren echoing along the rocky distances. It was the first severance. The ship had been their life! Now the great stony faces of the cliffs and the sinister ice must do.

It was only a passing mood, a feeling; the banter did not stop a moment. They were not sorry to see the end of the unloading which had gone on for thirty-six hours. Not pangs of separation, not homesickness, but rather the feeling that he would soon be able to sleep, that he would wake to novelty, to

endless anticipation—these were Stud's feelings as he helped row to shore. Murison expressed his relief. Stud noticed that Dreslar was not sharing his thoughts with either of them. But Dreslar, unlike either, had already had a winter at Ponds.

That had been in August. Curiously then, the next day it snowed enough to whiten everything, and in the long shadows of the rocks the snow remained. By September a thicker ice was floating out and in on the tides.

"No chance of escape now," said Murison to Stud, smiling.

Winter came with the October moon, driving the men in to the core of life, their fire. Stud thought that he had never imagined a life so suitable, so amusing, fascinating even, however the walls of winter cut them off from the world. He enjoyed the chores. He felt that they had scored against the increasing sense of hostility outside when they had finished banking the detachment with snow. Strangely enough, this had been a difficult undertaking, snow being scarce. The incredible winds swept it away, somewhere far into the folds of the land. Only in ravines and beside ledges were they able to cut enough for their protection.

Stud liked carrying out the storm lantern to read the thermometer's amazing announcement. "Thirty-two below; oh, boy!" . . . "It's forty-five to-night, fellows." When it crossed sixty for the first time he wondered why Murison said simply: "Is that so? How are the dogs?" and went on reading. Dreslar had not even bothered to swear. This irritated Stud.

The crazy sun had interested him from the time they left Labrador, in what seemed now to him far Southern waters. He had watched it circle up into the sky like a slow goldfish and curl slowly down in the north, but without touching bottom. It grew noticeably lazier every day. He remembered the night it had first dipped below Bylot Range, and the first day it had failed to emerge above the sky-line had excited him. Storms hid it to his impatience, and only from time to time could he note the pale, clear light as November waned, then the saffron glow of the December noon, the ghostly flush over the southern horizon—the dark.

Nine days of a monumental blizzard hid the world entirely. The men had taken turns feeling their way out to the dogs, and when Stud's turn came he thought that this was the climax of adventure. He was conscious only of a thick dusk roaring by unseen, he felt the ground drift cut like pieces of razor blades. He wondered what sort of world would emerge from so great a wrecking. But the calm, clear month of uninterrupted moonlight surprised him again. He had never imagined such a sight—the ghostliness of unending space overlaid by unending stillness, with pools of absolute blackness to mark the shadow of a rock.

The time of storm had made him conscious of a little constraint in their partnership. Often a meal would pass now in complete silence. Life began to have weight, like something one is carrying and cannot get on with. At their busiest there was little to do. The dogs were soon fed with fish, the heater

with coal, the ice-pan with lumps of berg. Stud had gone over his kit until no further fixing was possible. He memorized the map of his coming patrol. Even when it was his week to cook, the three meals left most of the day to dispose of.

The men read till their eyes ached, played cards until betting lost its edge, smoked through uninterrupted reveries, talked about the company, about the unforeseen results of missionaries, the technique of igloo-making, dog-feed, ice. Dreslar would twist the radio dial for hours at a time and come away disappointed. Twice, on unforgettable evenings, the news-bearing waves of ether crept through the barrage of auroral fire and talked to them. Their moods slipped off, joy leapt up in them like a flame, and they renewed their resistance to the vast powers crushing in on them.

Christmas Day, secretly dreaded by all, was celebrated in the light of a coal-oil lamp, with the detachment shaken by so furious a northeaster that their native guests could not arrive from three hundred yards away. On no other day could civilization have found them vulnerable, but Christmas had power to wound. They wished they could sleep the clock around. Discipline, like a strict and silent tutor, guided them about abysses which would have swallowed the undisciplined, and brought them safely to the New Year.

This holiday was better. Komonee's family came, bringing the house guests, including a girl whom Stud felt that he might get up a little practical fondness for. They played games, "Puss in the Corner,"

and "Chewing the String," games so hearty and amusing that the Husky women threw themselves on the floor and rolled with laughter.

But the real winter—still moonlit, and not unbearably cold—brought relief. Murison took Stud off on a polar-bear hunt, and the novice learned the handling of dogs. Dreslar and Komonee went sealing. They marked off a football ground on the ice and played by moonlight. There could be no policing proper, since nobody existed to police, save families hundreds of miles apart. They set out trap lines, fifteen and twenty miles in length, and Stud, trudging home past the black shadows of icebergs, would look at the never-setting moon, so barren, lifeless, and frozen, and wonder sometimes if he had not been translated.

With January gone, however, all was changing. The red burned higher daily in the southern sky and the men came out of that quietness which did not resemble peace, into the peace of activity. The time was nearing when they could do what they had been sent North to do. The food tasted better, and they talked late now. Looking back, they saw that they had emerged from a crouching, ominous danger, saved by discipline and Murison's enforcement of it. But that was past. . . . It was in these night talks that Stud rounded out his knowledge of their neighbor Ledwin, five hundred miles to the south.

"I'll bet you a month's pay-check that you'll find him batty as a loon," said Dreslar, one night. "If he was pacing the floor last summer and talking to

himself, as Enslee reported, he's sure to be loony now."

"Loony nothing," said Murison. "The man's deaf. He doesn't know he is talking aloud, more than likely."

"The bet stands," said Dreslar.

"Why'd the L. and T. send out a deaf trader?" asked Stud.

"They didn't. The deafness came on him here. He was an officer on a mine-sweeper and got torpedoed, and I suppose that started it. But Enslee told me that Ledwin was all right the first time they met. Now, of course, if he can't hear what the natives say, that would account for the strange tales. They ask him if he's hungry, and he doesn't answer, and so they think he's peculiar."

"I can't blame them," interposed Dreslar. "To want to live at that place, alone, is peculiar, to start with. Why did he come out? But then, why on God's green earth did any of us?"

"Enslee told me," said Murison, "that Ledwin was in great spirits the first year, a self-reliant, independent, romantic chap."

"Yes, romantic," said Dreslar. "So was I. And how the capacity for that folly grows!"

"Oh, shut up, Dressy," said Stud. "I want to hear Murison."

" . . . a romantic, with scientific interests. That was in 'twenty-three when he came out to trade for the L. and T. The company sent out for him in 'twenty-four, but he wouldn't go home. He wrote

back saying he was staying a year longer because it was the ideal life."

"What did I tell you? Touched! Batty! Bughouse." Dreslar looked pleased.

"Not bughouse; interested," corrected Murison. "He liked to draw. He had a gift for it, and some of his maps have been accepted. You can't be very bughouse and accomplish that, can you? Anyway, he didn't go back as planned in 'twenty-four, and the next year the ice was too bad. The captain landed his stores farther down the coast. And this last year the company didn't send."

"You mean they left him marooned?" asked Dreslar, in horror.

"I don't know the facts. There's usually something behind that one doesn't know. At any rate, his people got in touch with Ottawa in time to have Enslee look him up. What happened, I don't know. Maybe Ledwin refused other aid as he refused Enslee's."

"Enslee should have brought him anyway," said Dreslar.

"By force? It's a serious thing to compel a man without cause. Just because a fellow is devoted to the work in hand, isn't to write him down a lunatic."

"Doesn't it depend on the work?" asked Dreslar. "If your work drives you out on the ice, rifle in one hand, binoculars in the other, admittedly gunning for white men, and vowing that you are going to shoot the ship when it arrives, then the work's the wrong sort and you're nuts to go on with it. That's

what Ledwin did. Atigalee told Enslee so. Does that sound precisely sane to you?"

"If you believe all the natives tell us," said Murison, "you've a heavy program ahead, Dressy. If Ledwin was so anxious to pot a white man, why didn't he shoot the inspector? And if he was nutty, don't you think that Enslee would have noticed?"

"Ah, well," said Dreslar, "Stud will see," and all such conversations ended so. Stud was to be the alienist and to judge whether Ledwin was in his right mind or raving; whether merely stubborn as a scientist, which was Murison's contention, or irrational and dangerous, as the local Eskimos reported. The men had placed their bets on the outcome before Stud started, and now as he sat in his igloo, through the whole next day of storm, he pondered on his interesting objective.

Stud favored Dreslar's disconcerting opinion, in spite of his high estimate of Murison's judgment. Murison's level temperament was exactly suited to withstand the inroads on a man's balance as made by that contorted life. Stud was strung a key or two higher. If his healthy nature, with two friends for company, had suffered depression through the darkness, how could an uncompanioned man, with only the blank solitudes for counsel, hope to hold on the narrow path of sanity?

"I'll see," he said aloud. Komonee looked up, asking if he had spoken. "Ice the *komitik*," said Stud. "To-morrow the wind will be on our backs and we can go."

The wind obliged, and they pushed along to

Button Point, where the first problem posed in Stud's way. Two native families who had left the trading post ten days before had been held up by a continuous wind until their food was gone. Stud had carefully measured out his rations. How much tea, how many biscuit should he spare? Yet his duty, his first reason for being there at all, was to tide over such stragglers until they could hunt or reach a cache. So this he did.

Once turned south, Stud felt that his long march had fairly begun. He was impressed by the burden of space. On shipboard the sea had given him a new standard of size, but crawling along on the ice floor dwarfed anything he had previously known. Day after day he plodded south, conscious of the distance to go, yet also conscious that it was as nothing in the vast levels lying on his right, the great and unbelievable expanse called Canada. Often the deep snow piled in front of his laden sledge, making progress difficult; more often the wind-squeezed ice uplifted the floes, turning the going into a sort of mountaineering on a small scale. The dogs' feet were cut and Stud had recourse to their little skin boots, igloo-made. Each evening Stud noted down in his diary the weather and their progress.

Monday, March 28. Ice so rough that we were three hours in getting about a quarter of a mile. As there was no sign of the rough ice coming to an end, we camped for the night at 8 P.M.

Saturday, April 2. After building our igloo, native Komonee informed me that his back and arm was giving

him considerable pain, having had them injured a few years ago. I rubbed his back and arm with liniment.
Sunday, April 3. Komonee was not feeling at all well, being hardly able to stand upright or lift his arm.

Fortunately for a worried constable, there was assistance for the patrol in the line of march. At the end of a forbidding day when Stud not only had to control the dogs, ease the *komitik* over the sharp ice, and carry a sea of troubles in his inexperienced heart, they stumbled on a native camp. There it lay in the center of nowhere; a pin-point of the voiceless solitude had come to life—two large igloos and eleven natives, and the men, women, children, and dogs all joyous because the hunt had been good. That evening Stud wrote:

After supper, native Cooltilick brought his gramophone to my igloo and treated us to an hour's concert. Later I made arrangements with him to accompany me to River Arnold in place of Komonee.

With Cooltilick, an amiable and able man, along, the succeeding days saw good distance made. They turned in now from the sea, reaching the Hudson's Bay post at River Arnold on April 5. The young manager, Markoe Andrews, received the party hospitably, and told Stud of a visit made to Ledwin's place before Christmas.

"I don't know how you'll find him, Constable," said Andrews. "He wouldn't let me in at all."

"Ledwin wouldn't let you in?" repeated Stud, in amazement. "You traveled a hundred and twenty

miles and he refused you shelter?" And to himself: "Dressy and I win. He *must* be crazy."

Andrews uncannily hit on Stud's very thought. "You might as well say it, Constable. And yet I'm not so sure. A man can be queer a long time before he is crazy."

"And he wouldn't let you in!" Stud found it hard to believe.

"He'll have to be pulled out of there. He won't last till next summer at that rate. Especially since his natives have left him. Atigalee tells me that he and his brother have moved their families to a more wholesome locality."

"But what happened when you went down?" persisted Stud, who had long since learned to cherish facts.

"Atigalee went with me. He warned me that the trader had promised to shoot the first white man that came around. Ledwin said he knew that the Mounted Police and the company were both planning mischief to his person. So I was careful. You don't blame me for that? It was dark when we reached Dawn Bay, but the glow of his light came through the window. We found his house by that. It was frosted all over, the window was, frosted thick. I could see nothing. I knocked on the door. I heard footsteps and a voice. He was walking, walking up and down, and talking to himself. I couldn't make out what he said. I knocked for some time. After those threats I didn't like to force the door."

Stud said nothing.

"I felt sorry for him," continued Andrews, "but there was nothing to be done."

"And he didn't even call to you?"

"Not a word. Just kept on walking and talking to himself. There wasn't anything I could do. Not in the face of those threats."

The constable interviewed the few native women about the post, the men being still off hunting, and then resumed his patrol with Cooltilick.

The break in the travel had healed the dogs' cut feet, and three days after leaving River Arnold, Stud rounded the last cape of Dawn Bay and saw, infinitesimal in the plain of white, the L. and T. trading post in the clear noon. No sign of life stirred about it, nor hung as smoke in the air. Stud had a presentiment of finding that door still locked and of hearing the monotonous steps of the educated trader. Cooltilick grew increasingly nervous as they crossed the bay, the great white silence below glimmering up into the milky silence above.

"He not there . . . he not there," the native kept saying as they neared the shack.

"Where else could he be?" asked Stud.

Cooltilick shrugged his shoulders. "Dead, maybe."

The direst desolation seemed to have fallen on the place. Every appearance betokened long neglect. But the galloping dogs gave Stud no time for creepy thoughts. They stopped, and he rubbed his eyes in the blinding light. It was true. Cooltilick was pointing out the signal fact of its truth. The door of the shack had not been used. The doorway had

been blown over for weeks. That mute buried sill told Stud more without a syllable than he wanted to hear. He strode to the window.

But the window was thick with frost. After clearing away the low doorway, Stud tried the door. It was locked. Forcing his way in, Cooltilick remaining outside, he found another door, also locked. Forcing that, he entered a small anteroom, to meet a third door, weakly bolted, and this led into the last room. Stud bent low and entered this, and found that one visitor had been before him—Death. For on the bed, partly covered with blankets, lay the body of Mr. Romer Ledwin, frozen solid, his knees pulled up, and on his thin, thoughtful features every evidence of his having died at peace. From his unfeeling grasp had slipped to the floor the book he had been reading.

Stud instinctively leaned to pick it up and a letter fell out, a page of a letter from Ledwin's father. It read:

. . . before yesterday I have taken up your requests, for if you insist on living in such a place at less cash wages than a corporation dustman gets here in Nottingham, you should at least be supplied with the elementary comforts. But they do not seem inclined to accede and wrote me "we are afraid that Mr. Ledwin has been endeavoring to magnify some hardships which he has voluntarily undertaken. Such . . .

The constable replaced the page and looked around. The room was a den about eight feet by ten, and so low that he had to stoop or bump his head. It was void of every convenience save the bed, a

table, and a small stove. A plate of half-cooked lentils and some margarine had spilled from bed to floor. No sign of coal was to be seen, and only a few sticks of wood. On the table stood a dirty lamp, burnt out, and an open diary. Stud looked at the last entry:

> December 25. Sky a bit clearer to the southward, a brilliant ruddy flush tinted the snow and ice most beautifully. It does not seem in the least like Christmas to me, and I feel so ill as to be nearly helpless.

In the course of his duties Stud had seen death, and before he had joined the Force poverty had been as menacing a figure in his life as the town bully to his newsboy days. But this death, this poverty were different. Here a man had died uselessly, in loneliness and cold, in sickness and silence; he had died inexcusably. Surrounded with squalor and the incredible desolation of the Arctic, he had died on the world's happiest day, not "in the least like Christmas," or soon after. Stud's eyes roamed the room as he wondered what had brought the man, what had kept him, how he had endured so long.

Suddenly he felt a desperate longing for sunlight. He wanted to join Cooltilick outside. The friendly Arctic had grinned too openly at him, he was afraid it would wink. It had been given him to see the unappeasable hostility beneath the superficial charms. His lips repeated a line from the letter, "We are afraid that Mr. Ledwin has been endeavoring to magnify some hardships," and winced at the grim jest.

Stud's wave of anger was good for him; it shook him back to his business. There was much to be done before he could leave the spot. He would have to take the body back to Ponds Inlet for an inquest. That meant sewing it up in blankets, since no wood was at hand for a coffin. Depositions must be made if any natives could be found. Cooltilick could go farther up the bay and hunt for them.

Cooltilick was charmed to go. This handling of the dead broke too many taboos; something of ill omen was certain to follow. Nor had he a desire to sleep in the neighborhood of the body, no matter how peaceful the dead man's expression.

To find a native in that interminable solitude, which, for all the eye could see, went on to the ends of the world, required two of Cooltilick's most active days. And when he did return with two timid women, they were of small account. Atigalee, they reported, had come to observe the deceased through a telescope from a hill, since one did not neglect such objects of curiosity. Indeed, all the Eskimos on a thousand miles of coast had heard how savage this white man could be. Had he not shot two of his own dogs in his rage, before their eyes? Might he not shoot them by mistake? Was it not better to keep at the distance of a telescope? Stud took down these statements, and, having collected Mr. Ledwin's personal property, checked up the stores, nailed doors and boarded windows, he disbursed a little tea and departed.

It was high time, for with mid-April the great end-of-winter gales could be expected. The break-

up would follow, always suddenly, unexpectedly, always with danger. Indeed, a blizzard developed as they reached the height of land. By traveling seventeen hours without stopping they arrived at River Arnold and shelter, a fortunate thing, for, as Stud wrote:

> The storm continued for seven days and during that time I again interviewed Oakmili and his wife, along with several other natives. As they were the only two who could give any definite information regarding the time that the deceased was last seen alive, I told them that they would have to accompany me to Ponds Inlet so that they could be present at the inquest if required. A strong coffin was made.

And now, with May arriving, Stud entered upon the last quarter of his big patrol. At this season continuous winds from the northeast drove the moisture of the open sea inland, and snow fell daily. Yet if the sun did shine, its brightness was overwhelming, blinding the men in a few hours when the exigencies of guiding the *komitik* forced them to take off their snow-goggles.

Each hindrance became a dual irritation, a trouble in itself, and a snare of delay. The measureless expanse of ice, drowned in new snow, was doubly difficult to traverse for other reasons. At Sugar Cape a river was discovered running atop the ice, a discharge from some inland lake. This free water caused worlds of inconvenience and danger. But finally these black beetles of men crawling day by day over the infinite ice floor drove their footsore dogs into Cooltilick's camp as if it had been a city

which could not be missed. Komonee was found recovered. But Stud engaged Cooltilick to help the heavy *komitiks* back to Ponds Inlet.

The dog-feed was now exhausted through unforeseen delays. On May 7 it snowed so hard that even the natives begged to remain in camp. But Stud was secretly alarmed at their sluggish rate of advance. The welter of pressure ridges and up-ended floes had been almost impassable coming; but returning, the depth of new snow made every step experimental. The dogs sank to their bellies, the men could scarcely hold out for fifteen miles, when it was necessary to accomplish thirty. The outlook was an unchanging smudge of gray, and Stud, with no white man to talk to, brooded and chafed in the atmosphere of his own loneliness.

On Tuesday, May 10, a tragedy occurred. The dogs had got to Cooltilick's *komitik* lashing during the night and had eaten every inch of it, with thirty feet of seal rope additional. This delayed departure for precious hours. A few biscuit, a little tea and sugar remained.

Wednesday's going was very heavy, and they had not turned the corner at Cape Weld yet, which meant five days from home, five days of normal travel. Stud eyed the coffin. Should he drop it? Yet it was for him the symbol of success, the reason for his arrival. It embodied every precept of his five years of Police work; it was duty. They plodded on.

With Thursday a new blizzard started in from the northeast. Okamili's wife made a loaf from her

last flour and presented it to Stud. The constable was deeply touched by this generosity, but he declined; Okamili insisted, so the loaf was shared.

Friday the thirteenth dawned dark, and they had reached the roughest ice. Advance consisted of climbing ridges of ice, helping the fan of dogs over, easing the loaded *komitiks* down, and repeating. By evening it was clear to Stud that greater speed must be made or all would perish. He determined to leave all the natives but Cooltilick in camp, take the twenty best dogs and the coffin, and make a forced march to the post, now two days distant. Food could then be sent back.

The natives were satisfied with this arrangement, and Stud, after an hour's halt for reorganization, pushed westward. His unshaven face was lean with hunger and drawn with fatigue, but his heart, having sloughed off some of the load, was lighter. He was now definitely in that uncompromising situation called adventure, a rapacious situation, its jaws opening to swallow him; yet as adventure it was clean. Its elements were distance and fatigue, hunger and accident, nothing that a man of his training need shrink from facing. To pit his strength against these white miles, his wits against being lost, his spirit against failure—these were the very vicissitudes that the *esprit de corps* had foreseen.

Now he would be upheld by the religion with which Murison had first acquainted him. To strengthen him in just such a struggle, had those tales of doggedness been told around barrack stoves. Invisible heroes of the outfit, his outfit, ran beside.

And as his hollow body twisted with each step, his mind wandered freely in the past, picking up some word of Ralstead's, some tale of another patrol successful against greater odds. He recalled with a gasp of a laugh the smug old-timer's remarks that night in the canteen, his blind regrets for the passing of the Force. None so blind, thought Stud, as they who will not see.

The dimness of midnight passed but they drove on. It was Saturday now. As the morning aged, Cooltilick felt the strain more, stopping occasionally to retch and vomit, Stud steadying him, encouraging him. And the native would win back his smile and run on.

Morning went, noon came, and Stud became conscious of a mortal weariness. He focussed his eyes and his will on a blurred cape ahead, passed that, fixed his attention on another cape, passed that, and on. He knew he dared not stop, for the heaviness which could not be thrown off was creeping over him. He glanced at that stupid, senseless burden of a coffin, but some fiber of pride in him would not let him chuck it. It signified too much.

At noon the sun broke through, and, looking across the vast outspread floor, he saw in the blur of distance a familiar contour, the home hills. The end was measurable, but misgivings rose in between. Could he hold out? Each step was an effort now, a mile too prodigious to think about. But the circuits of his mind were narrowed, his aim was that detachment and that flag. The rest of the world was

Courtesy of North West Territories and Yukon Branch

LEAVING HOME: BAFFIN ISLAND

Courtesy of North West Territories and Yukon Branch

LUNCH: BAFFIN ISLAND

a blur, as in a fever. Just to reach that dot, to stop, to rest . . .

At the end of the thirty-fifth hour of continuous travel a door opened. Stud heard dogs barking, men's voices; he felt a hand under his arm. He knew it was Murison who was talking but he did not care what Murison was saying. He had something to say first:

"Send Komonee's son back with food . . . quick." When they had given him a little drink and before he dropped back in the bunk, he thought of the other thing he had to say: "Nobody won, fellows."

That August the boat was late and Dreslar, who was going out, grew nervous. He watched from a point whence one could look farthest down the inlet, and Stud, to humor him, often took up the vigil while Dreslar ate. Stud was beginning to worry, too, but for a different reason. Next summer, by the new order forbidding men to spend more than two consecutive years in the farthest North, *he* would be in Dreslar's shoes. *He* would be leaving. How ghastly!

The twitter of ptarmigan reached his ears. A glittering iceberg shone against the immense and purplish east as it had been shining all evening. A sleeping seal was slowly drifting by on a cake of ice. Stud shied a stone at it idly, although he knew it was too far to hit. So he would be hauled south from this paradise, would he? They'd station him

in Cardston or some hole, would they? Who would train his dogs?

"Not a chance!" he said aloud, belligerently skipping another stone toward the seal. "I'd sooner leave the outfit and come back."

CHAPTER XVIII

Extracts from G. O.'s

No. 6801

The following transfer to date on 1-8-26:

Reg. No. —— Corpl. Ivry, Alan, from Montreal to "E" Div'n, Vancouver.

No. 6805

Extra pay at the rate of 50¢ per diem is hereby granted the undermentioned of "E" Div'n for the number of days after their respective names while employed on special plain clothes duty during the month of June, 1926:

Reg. No. —— Const. Sorley, J. D., 30.
Reg. No. —— Const. Laronde, P., 30.

CHAPTER XIX

The Case of Wai Kuen

"THE main trouble is," said Sergeant Frees, "that nobody will realize what a devil he is. This green-livered creature we're after isn't human. He's a spider, a reptile. No, I beg all reptiles' pardon. He's poison itself. Yet nobody seems to get excited over his activities."

Inspector Meeker nodded. "How old is Mr. Wai Kuen?"

"Thirty-four or five. He looks fifty."

"He looks ageless. That's the reason I asked. All these Orientals look as if they'd been weathered by centuries."

"Of evil," added Frees, whose non-commissioned mind viewed the Chinese in the single-rayed light of opium-smuggling. "One doesn't grow that bad in a lifetime, sir. It takes generations."

"You don't esteem him very highly," said the inspector. "That's evident."

"These dope magnates turn my stomach" said the competent Frees. "If a man took money for ruining a human soul to save himself from starvation he'd still be pretty low in my estimation. But this one's wealthy. He's fattened on others' souls. He's a millionaire by it."

"That's the reason we never get him, apparently."

"Yes, sir."

The two men fell silent a moment. It was the dead of night in the Vancouver city office of the Force, and Inspector Meeker was checking up a recent investigation of the Wai Kuen Emporium, Oriental Goods a Feature. He and others of the Criminal Investigation had recently been checkmated by the forces of evil and a larger money-chest. Meeker had just come to "E" Division,—comprising British Columbia and overlooking the Orient,—and he encouraged the zealous and direct-spoken Frees in his after-hour observations, the officer's pride being all for his work and not too much in his rank.

"Are there no informants we can trust?"

Frees's cannon-ball head wagged once, not hopefully. "We hired Jim Foon in the gun-running case against Wai Kuen; he disappeared. Hop Lee was a special agent in the Lee Foy smuggling affiair; he died of poison. Mind you, I don't say that Wai Kuen poisoned him; he merely died, in some agony, a few hours before he would have been useful. And then there's Jang Shee, since you came, sir. What happened to her is too rotten to think about. And there he sits safe, in that dark warehouse, crawling with money and as foul with iniquity as those premises of his are foul with evil secrets."

Inspector Meeker laughed. "I really think you don't like him."

"Then you've guessed it, sir," and even Frees

smiled. "I've met lots of criminals I could like. I'm not that fussy. Nice chaps a little out of luck. But this one gives me the shivers. I believe he regards killing as you regard buying a pack of Millbanks, a trifling expense for the satisfaction involved."

Meeker yawned. "How long's he been flourishing, did you say?"

"Nobody knows when he came. But I've been here five years now, with a break or two, and we haven't touched him yet. I remember at the beginning—"

There was a knock on the door and Detective-Corporal Ivry came in.

"I remember at the beginning," continued Frees, "we all took a crack at him. When a new chap arrived, or if one of the boys needed something to do, he was set to shadowing Wai Kuen, or one of Wai Kuen's subordinates, his tools. We grabbed a number of his tools, but never their master. And how he must have laughed at us behind that dirty mask!"

"One other question," said Meeker. "Do you suppose there's really so much to get as you infer? On him personally, I mean?"

Frees looked at his superior as a doctor studies a patient, then decided not to say it. He wiped a cheek with his sleeve before he spoke, then said:

"I'm as sure that Wai Kuen is the king-pin of all this dope business as I'm sure he's the big boss of Chinatown. And every one will tell you that, sir."

"Why don't they put Chase on the job, sir?" suggested Ivry.

"I have asked for him," said Meeker.

"He'll be about our best bet now," said Frees. "Where did you know him, Corporal?"

"I was on a little counterfeiting case with him. But that was two years ago. He's grown since then."

"He has certainly cleaned up on that Jacob gang in Montreal," commented Frees, admiringly. "But has he the connections to help us here? It will take a year's preparation to burrow into Wai Kuen's acquaintance. He's a fiend for caution."

"If you mean connections in New York, Chase has had your year," said Ivry. "That's his selling-point. He educated himself before he ever saw our outfit. A good thing, too."

Meeker again yawned. "You boys can talk about that all next week. What did you find out about the Emporium's whisky deal, Corporal?"

Ivry gave the latest findings in another one of the counts against Wai Kuen. When it was suspected that the Emporium was shipping in cargoes of whisky as peanut oil, consigned to another merchant who lent his name for a price, the Mounted Police had engaged a clever man named Wing Wing, who had previously been acting as interpreter in Chinese cases, to act as Wai Kuen's bookkeeper. This position he succeeded in attaining when Mr. Wai Kuen's system of devious and more than double entries required an additional mind. Unfortunately the treasure of deceit of which he became informed did the Force no good. They could hardly act on it without forfeiting their agent's life.

"Wing Wing knows of no way of sharing this data without implicating himself," said Ivry, in conclusion, "and I think he's right. His life wouldn't be worth four bits."

"And we do need him for our other business," said Meeker. "It's the big dope issue that we want to sew up tight."

"Yes," said Frees, bitterly, "and so tight that his white friends can't rip it open."

The inspector was arrested by Sergeant Frees's tone. "What do you mean?"

"His business friends, sir. Where there's money there's business, and if you raised an effectual hand against Wai Kuen, you'd find a dozen houses, reputable houses, standing up for him. For conviction would mean deportation, sir, after the imprisonment, as you know, and deportation would interfere with business."

"Oh, come, come, Sergeant," said Meeker. "Aren't you letting your zeal influence your good sense? Nobody'd stand up for that scoundrel."

The non-commissioned mind merely smiled. "That danger's a long way off, sir."

"But I don't believe it. Do you believe it, Corporal?"

"I do, sir," said Ivry, quietly, "and the law would sympathize."

The inspector flushed. "Do you men realize what you're saying?"

A cold glint darted from the corporal's gray eyes. "Will you look at the law in its own logical way, sir? If you should murder me quickly, painlessly,

and without touching my self-respect, you'd hang for it, wouldn't you?"

"Yes, within six months."

"But if you put me in the graveyard by the dope route, slowly, with mental torture, and at the cost of all self-respect, what penalty would the law exact?"

"Six months to six or seven years."

"Yes, sir," said Ivry, with a restrained but contemptuous finality.

Meeker colored. "If you have lost all respect for the law, why do you continue to serve it?"

"Because the traffic continues, sir," said Ivry. "It's the worst thing on earth, and the worst offenders get lighter sentences than common thieves."

"I don't like the way you talk," said Meeker. "You take this all too seriously. Get the goods on Wai and leave the rest to the judiciary of the country."

"As an N. C. O. I have to," said Ivry, "but as a thinking man I can't believe that it is less serious to poison the minds and bodies of ignorant people in great numbers than to rob a country bank."

"I advise you," said Meeker, severely, "to think as an N. C. O. during your term of service."

The premises of the Waî Kuen Emporium, Oriental Goods a Feature, were indeed no place for the nervous to visit after dark, as Constable Perrot Laronde, wearing at the moment an external resemblance to an un-uniformed messenger boy, thought

on a misting evening in August some two weeks later. He had been detailed to loiter near the door, without giving the appearance of loitering, a difficult operation on Sun Kee Boulevard. But Perrot had grown into undertaking difficulties not badly. In his journey from irresponsible to trumpeter, from trumpeter to constable, the boy had borne the same backbone along, but a gradually stiffening one. It would always be a light-hearted backbone, but it was straight now, and on top of it was poised a quick-thinking head, able to concoct philandering deviltries or to shadow his man, with equal ease.

And now as Parrot looked at the markets of rice and ginger, of smoked duck and melon seed, never quite losing sight of the Wai Kuen door, he imagined himself detailed to hide in those extravagantly talked of premises. Wai Kuen's fourth wife, he knew, was reported to be held a prisoner on one of the floors. Or would it be in the cellar? He had heard from Wing Wing that Wai Kuen concealed his treasures of opium and cocaine and these drugs' disastrous relatives in those dark passages, behind walls, and beneath secret panels. The house was a mystery as impalpable as a contagion, and as invisibly perilous to Vancouver. Its very inhabitants were mysteries, like these Oriental walking mysteries on the streets. Parrot wished that his man, who was in the house at that moment, would hurry up.

The man, however, was in no hurry. He had handed his letter of introduction to Wing Wing, saying, "From Mr. Lun Sen."

"Where you from, Mr. Bardy?" asked Wing Wing.

"Detroit. It's all in the letter. What I want is told in the letter, too," said Mr. Bardy. "Mr. Wai Kuen will know."

"I don't think him in," said Wing Wing. "He be in to-morrow."

"All right, to-morrow's all right," said Mr. Bardy.

"Wait. I see if Boss come in maybe."

Mr. Bardy waited. In his tight black overcoat, black derby, flashy muffler and gloves, the man gave the instant impression of knowing his way. Almost of knowing it too well. The impression was strengthened by his air. He might have been a partner of Mr. Wai Kuen's if his address, his attitude, his assurance told anything. One would not have trusted him in enterprises more strait and legitimate.

It was a huge store, displaying every object used in barter, with Oriental goods indeed a feature. In the rear a dim light showed a cashier's gilded cage, close to an inner office, and doors beyond leading into a further darkness. Wing Wing appeared to Mr. Bardy and said that Mr. Wai Kuen was by chance in, and would Mr. Bardy follow?

As Mr. Bardy neared the dim light and the gilded cage he saw a big Chinese bending over a ledger. The cage brought out the man's size, and the light emphasized his yellowish skin. The head looked up and Mr. Bardy was scrutinized by two expressionless eyes, heavy eyes set in a skin of a heavy, dead color.

"I have a letter from my friend about you," said Wai Kuen, and he motioned to Wing Wing to withdraw.

Mr. Bardy took the limp hand offered. He had not expected to have this great pleasure, he said, bowing as low as his tight overcoat would allow. It had been good of Mr. Lun Sen to write in his behalf. It was delightful of Mr. Wai Kuen to see personally so inconsiderable a customer.

Mr. Wai Kuen, intent on adding further lines to the ledger, waved flowery introductions. A small customer was, after all, a customer, and good beginnings were often small.

"How long have you known Mr. Lun Sen?"

"About five years," said Mr. Bardy; "ever since he moved to Detroit from the West, after being with you."

"So he told you that?" and Mr. Wai Kuen moved his eyes ever so little. "How did you come to know him?"

"We used to smuggle Chinese together. Canada is close to Detroit. Mr. Toy Wing helped us before he went to New York."

"I know Toy Wing," said Wai Kuen. "How long have you been in the business?"

Mr. Bardy glanced around, unconsciously, before answering in a lower tone.

"Nearly four years. I was just establishing a connection with Mr. Jacob when he got knocked off. Mr. Jacob in Montreal."

"Yes, I knew him," Wai Kuen muttered. "A fool."

Mr. Bardy assented. "And now I have no big connection. Jacob promised me all the Number One Lamkee I could take. But now I can get none."

"How much was that?"

"Forty cans a week. More in time."

Wai Kuen did not blink, but his voice showed an intenser interest as he asked, "Where you from now?"

"Detroit; also New York. Mr. Lun Sen told me that you were the biggest connection in Vancouver—indeed, on all the coast."

The flattery had no visible effect, and Mr. Bardy went on: "There is a good market in New York, a growing market. We can do some big things there, but we must have some Number One Lamkee."

"How many?"

"Two hundred cans the first month. Then more as I build up my business."

Wai Kuen's expressionless stare grew a degree harder.

"Things are pretty tight around here now," he said. Even to a millionaire a customer worth sixteen thousand dollars a month is something of a prize; but one must not be carried away. "Are you alone?"

"I have a partner in New York. He has the big money," confessed Mr. Bardy.

"I can take your address," said Wai Kuen, in an emotionless voice. It was as if he had said good-by to Mr. Bardy. The sixteen-thousand-dollar customer gave him the address. Mr. Wai Kuen advised moving to another hotel.

"The law has a watch here," he said. "It is not

your Detroit." Mr. Wai Kuen allowed himself a relaxation of the lips. "I can tell you in case anything turns up," he said, distantly, as if referring to next year. But he was in a good humor; he saw Mr. Bardy to the door. Constable Perrot was rewarded by seeing his man descend the steps of the Emporium into the street.

On the third day, after a period of inaction very galling to the opium-buyer, Mr. Bardy's telephone rang, summoning him to the Wai Kuen Emporium. Detective-Corporal Ivry was the shadow on this occasion, and he noted in his book for handy reference in court that Mr. Bardy entered the store precisely at noon. Mr. Wai Kuen was hard at work operating an adding-machine. There was a stir in the store and the proprietor took his customer back into the inner office. His first words were something of a relief to Mr. Bardy.

"It is all right," he said. "Everything is all right."

"Then you have the Number One Lamkee for me?" asked Mr. Bardy.

"I canot get Number One Lamkee."

"I don't see what is all right, then, said Mr. Bardy.

"I have asked my connection, and he say you are all right to do business for."

"Was that the reason for the delay?" asked Mr. Bardy, coldly.

The face of Wai Kuen registered precisely nothing.

"I cannot get Number One Lamkee," he repeated.

"We had a bad time getting it out of the water. The law is pretty tough now."

Mr. Bardy understood that the price would be higher.

"But I cannot get it, I tell you," said Wai Kuen. "Not until the next big boat, see? But I have lots of Number Two. That is good opium. Canada buys lots of Number Two. I have direct wires pulling for me in Hongkong, and I have the first option on goods coming to this coast. I have a good partner. We have worked well. Nobody can get any opium on this coast without getting it from me. So if I say you cannot get Number One Lamkee, you cannot."

"I understand," said Mr. Bardy, still cool.

"How did you do business with Mr. Jacob?"

"Ah, he will be a great loss to me! I could depend on him with my money. That is what I liked about him. I could depend on what he said."

Mr. Wai Kuen was showing the least sign of impatience.

"I like to do business with one man," Mr. Bardy went on, "only one. A person is taking a chance of being stuck up for the goods or knocked off by the law if he talks to too many. I like to play a lone hand and talk to nobody but the man I give my money to and get the goods from. I used to send Mr. Jacob a cashier's check and we used the race-track code for our goods. Mr. Jacob, he seemed able to cash these checks under any name I sent them under."

"I can do the same," said Wai Kuen. "I have many white friends."

"But you have me all up in the air," said Mr. Bardy.

"How is that, in the air?"

"Look here," and Mr. Bardy smoothed out a crumpled telegram. "My partner says to ship Number One Lamkee in a week, sure."

"I have no Number One," said Wai Kuen, with the calmest conclusiveness.

"Then," said Mr. Bardy, "I had better send him samples of what you have."

Wai Kuen stuck his big head forward. "How is that, samples?"

"One can, ten cans, to judge by, to sample. In New York," said Mr. Bardy, "they want only the best, and my partner wouldn't like it if I sent him a lot of something he couldn't dispose of. If I take ten cans of Number Two to Seattle and send them to him, he'll have them before a week, see? And I can wire you from Seattle how many cans after that. How much is Number Two?"

"A can, sixty dollars," said Wai Kuen.

After some discussion of the price, the proprietor told Mr. Bardy to come back at 8 P. M. The ten cans would be ready.

Accordingly Mr. Bardy entered the store at eight o'clock, to find several customers at the counters, and Wai Kuen walking about near the entrance. Mr. Bardy exhibited no surprise, however, even when the impassive Chinese said to him in a low voice:

"Walk to the bead counter and look as if you wanted to buy something. There is a detective in

the store," and louder, "Wing Wing, show the gentleman what he desires."

Mr. Bardy, still betraying no emotion, leaned upon the counter and examined bead bags with some deliberation, until Wing Wing signified that the danger had departed. When Wai Kuen and his customer had discussed friends they had in common in the States, the Chinese asked:

"How will you get the big order from Canada to New York?"

"There are baggagemen," said Mr. Bardy. "Last year I used to put anything I wanted on a train, get a check without buying a ticket, and be out only a few dollars to the baggageman. Business is very simple, if one knows."

Wai Kuen's heavy eyes did not light. "We will arrange a code now. Then you can write to me from your hotel in Seattle."

"And here is the money for the ten cans," added Mr. Bardy, producing six hundred dollars in new money. "I'll take the early morning boat."

Wai Kuen was looking at Mr. Bardy's coat. "Can you hide ten cans under that without showing?"

"It is night," said Mr. Bardy, "and they are small."

Ten minutes later he appeared on the steps of the Emporium, and then, by a circuitous route, changing cars twice, made his way back to the Mounted Police headquarters to report.

Detective-Sergeant Frees had been waiting for him, and his exclamation of satisfaction, a bare "That's great!" meant more to Alec than many

eulogies. Ridding himself of coat and flashy muffler, Alec heard him add:

"It's the first time we've ever got through to the Big Boss. Wait till I get Ivry . . . "

The outer door opened and Parrot entered. He had been Alec's shadow, and the shadow now spoke his grievance:

"It's all very well for you, smooth guy. You sit in a padded chair while I hang around in the fog. What were you doing all the time?—having supper?"

Ivry came in, closely followed by Inspector Meeker, and in their congratulations Alec heard an echo of his best dreams. Frees was already pasting labels on one of the cans.

"That'll be Exhibit Nine," said he.

"Have you numbered my partner's wire?" asked Alec.

"Yes, Number Seven. The marked bills are Exhibit Eight."

"Here's praying we get all of that six hundred dollars back," said Meeker, and to Alec: "Well, Mr. Bardy, you and I will be taking the ten-thirty boat to Seattle in the morning."

"The same boat?" asked Alec, with respectful doubt.

"Yes. We won't notice each other, of course, and will go to different hotels."

"Your room is reserved at the Lionel, Inspector," said Frees, "under the name of Dunwoodie, and the corporal will be at the Harrison as Mr. Birch."

"Get this down on your list as Number Ten, Ser-

geant," and Alec showed Frees Wai Kuen's business card, "and I've thought of one more identification. I'll phone him, saying I am mailing back some papers which it is better for me not to have on my person, and I'll put this card with them to hold for me. The mark goes there," and he put a dot in one corner. "Will you please listen in?"

Frees took up the other receiver, while Ivry listened close by Alec as he got Wai Kuen on the wire.

"Is that you, Harry?" he said, Harry being the code name. "This is your Detroit friend, Harry. I'm mailing you some papers to keep for me. I wouldn't want them on me if I got stuck up. That all right?" It was all right, said Harry, and very wise. "See you in a week."

"That's the Big Boss's voice," said Frees.

Alec was sitting in his bedroom at the Harrison, writing his first letter to Harry. Alec had aged. He looked thirty, although he had just turned twenty-six. The life of his choice, gone into as he had gone into it, was exacting. In the Jacob case he had played a difficult and dangerous rôle for days at a time, as he was starting to play one now. Nor was there here a prompter in the wings on his stage if he was at a loss for a line. To be sure, working for the Force was like coming home, after those strange and often horrible years of apprenticeship among the dens and dives of Detroit and New York. Yet they had supplied his acquaintanceship with Lun Sen, Toy Wing, and the others whose very names were open sesame to the Wai Kuen confi-

dence. Alec did not regret the years, although when he visited Bill and his wife in Ottawa and saw Bill Junior he felt a certain envy. Bill in turn regarded Alec's devotion as something to chaff his friend out of.

Only when Alec was very tired did he ever wonder if Bill could be right; and at the moment he was very tired. The Jacob case had been prolonged and exciting, as well as perilous, and Alec's participation, while contributing largely to the Force's victory, had also made inroads on his nervous energy. Then without a chance to rest, he had been whipped across the continent to plunge at Wai Kuen, and here he was, tired, alone, endeavoring to write a letter of credible lies. This sort of deception was the hardest for him. In the heat of encounter, there was the thrill of contest, the necessity of infinite awareness; but just to write mendacities required a double initiative.

He took some papers from his note-book and a newspaper clipping fell out. He read it again, a paragraph from the "Detroit News" of April 29; emphatically not a paragraph to brood over when one was tired. The black letters said:

DOPE RING GUNS MISS THEIR MAN

The bullets which struck Amos Brill, 27-year-old Federal Narcotic agent, came from the guns of a Montreal-Windsor-Detroit dope ring and were intended for Detective Corporal Alexander Chase of the Canadian Mounted Police. Brill is in the hospital in Windsor. The two men were in an automobile Friday near St. Antoine and Guernsey streets. Chase's

foot happened to catch in a robe as he was getting out of the car, and as he stumbled a bullet whizzed over his head, striking Brill. Other bullets found Brill's leg and chest. Chase, with great presence of mind, dragged his comrade quickly up an alley, the attackers firing one more volley without effect and speeding away. They have not been apprehended as yet. Brill's condition is serious. Chase will be remembered as the Mounty who has recently done such good work in unearthing Jacob, the dope king of Montreal. Since that time the Detective-Corporal has been a marked man, tracked by one or another of the members of the disrupted gang.

The marked man smiled sourly. It was delicate flattery, if not unqualified fame, to be shot at. In better spirits, he resumed the compilation of his code letter, which stated that he, Joseph Bardy, had arrived safely, and after communicating with his partner by wire, was pleased to inform Harry that Mr. Brown was essential to the party. Mr. Brown was the code word for Number One Lamkee. After showing this letter to Inspector Meeker, now Mr. Dunwoodie, Alec sent it, receiving this reply:

Dear Friend:

Received your letter to-day. Am glad to hear you arrived there safe. Mr. Brown is now in town and he will be ready to join your party at any of time. Please let me know as soon as you possible, because Mr. Brown may want to go away very shortly.

With best regards,

HARRY.

Allowing time for his mythical samples to reach New York, Alec with Meeker returned to Vancouver, after announcing by special delivery to Wai Kuen that he might expect a caller on the following Sunday evening. It was all curiously like a dream.

It is difficult for a white shadow to keep one doorway under surveillance long without being noticed, especially when it is a Chinese doorway on a street thronging only with Chinese. But Parrot had not been a son of the streets for nothing. It was Parrot who had devised a lookout under an old warehouse opposite Wai Kuen's Emporium, and to this remarkable cave of broken boards, evil-smelling dirt, and cans he led Detective-Corporal Ivry on the Sunday evening mentioned in Alec's letter to Wai Kuen.

There they lay and waited, the saturnine Ivry and the lively Parrot, cheek by jowl, while a raw sea mist poured down the street and turned them clammy.

"I thought August was the month it didn't rain in Vancouver," said Parrot.

"That's in the publicity it doesn't rain," said Ivry, savagely. "It practically never rains on chambers of commerce. Or only in a dry, pleasant way. I'm getting rheumatism in this hole of yours, Parrot."

"Give Alec one in the tail for that, not me," said Parrot. "What do you suppose he does in that bitch of an Emporium? He ought to go live there."

"Ssh! There he is," said Ivry. "Now for it, kid. Watch his hat!"

But there was no movement of Alec's hat. He had not had occasion to lift it and scratch his head. He

had failed. Parrot swore deeply, volubly, worse than any sailor's bird.

Alec had entered the store in high hope. He was about to throw the noose over the West's most abominable malefactor, give the signal, and let his fellows pull the rope tight. Outdoors in the night the actors were at their posts. Indoors the scene was to his liking. Wing Wing leaned against the shelves, on a ladder, taking down figures. Only one other Chinese servant was visible, and Wai Kuen, large of head, slow and heavy-eyed, was counting up his wealth in the cashier's cage. He greeted Mr. Bardy with a face whose immobility was unvitiated by any change of expression. If he felt any satisfaction at the progress of their plans it did not reach his eyes. Nothing, Alec felt sure, could touch his heart, neither compassion nor a sense of wrong, and the elation of a worthy success stirred in Alec's consciousness.

"You have come," said Wai Kuen.

"You got my letter?" asked Mr. Bardy.

Wai Kuen nodded to a pile of letters, and Alec saw his special stamp—which would be Exhibit 19—on one of them.

"Then you know I am ready to take the twenty cans of Number One. We can fix up about the Number Two later."

"I am very sorry," said Wai Kuen.

Mr. Bardy started, held himself in, but felt a glow of confused hatred fill his head. Was he to be frustrated just at the end? Was he to come so near and fail now? What had this man found out?

"I don't understand," he said.

"I am very sorry," repeated Wai Kuen, his eyes inspecting Mr. Bardy. "I made a mistake in the price-list."

Relief swept Mr. Bardy. He trembled just a little. So that was all; the price-list! Just the usual going back on one's word. All dopers were bottomless pits of deceit. He tried to listen to what Wai Kuen was saying:

" . . . after you had gone, you see. I told my partner and he did not like what I had done. We found that the price of Number Two should have been sixty-five dollars a can."

"I don't know what I can do now," said Mr. Bardy. "I quoted the other price to my partner," and he showed Wai Kuen the faked telegram of reply.

"That's too bad," said Wai Kuen, looking as a spider sympathetically looks at the enmeshed fly.

"Well, we'll have to pay you your price," Mr. Bardy continued. "I owe you five dollars a can more, then—fifty dollars."

"Yes," said the millionaire. The telephone at his elbow interrupted him with a call that smote Mr. Bardy's taut nerves a terrific jangle.

"I'll be right over," said Wai Kuen, rising as he dropped back the receiver. His manner was uneasy. "Pay me for the Number One now," he said, authoritatively, "and come back at eight to-morrow morning. I'll have it ready. But you are too tight to carry so much under your coat."

"I needn't button the coat."

"A suitcase is better."

"Won't it look funny for a white man to walk out of here with a suitcase?"

"I'll do it up for you any way you want. I must go now."

"Like a package of tea, then," said Mr. Bardy, "and there's the money." He counted out sixteen hundred dollars in marked bills into the parchment-colored palm. "At eight, then, to-morrow morning."

It was a disappointed Alec who explained all this to the men who had hidden for the raid and now were straggling back. Alec was searched by Frees, who noted down that the one thousand six hundred dollars given him was no longer on his person. To Inspector Meeker, Alec said:

"I'll have to have another marked fifty-dollar bill for to-morrow morning, I'm afraid, sir."

"It's these little things make one willing to hang a man," said Meeker.

Alec did not sleep. It was hard to tune everything to the right pitch and then not play your piece. And such a piece! A tiger-hunt, rather! Indeed, ridding some Bengal village of a man-eater was nothing either for danger or importance to entering the close dusk of that entombing warehouse and arresting Wai Kuen. Revenge could spring from those dim corners at a signal. Alec knew that he might be choked, extinguished in some cruel and noiseless way, before he could give the signal. He was relieved when dawn came, and seven o'clock, and he had been searched once more by Frees and started on his way under the surveillance of his invisible friends.

Half a block from the Emporium, Alec noticed a Chinese standing on its steps, looking up the street. As he caught sight of Mr. Bardy he reëntered the store, and the customer on reaching the place heard Wing Wing calling Wai Kuen downstairs. In a moment the Big Boss, clearly just out of bed, with a coat and trousers over his silk pajamas, came downstairs. He nodded to Mr. Bardy and took him back to the cashier's cage, where, after a few remarks on future plans, Wai Kuen said:

"Go out into the warehouse and get your package," and he motioned to the door.

"Where'll I find it?"

"Out there. Don't lose time."

On stepping into the warehouse, Mr. Bardy saw a Chinese lifting a parcel from a crate of greens. It was his opium. Mr. Bardy glanced about him to count the number of possible assailants when the big minute should arrive.

"That's fine," said Mr. Bardy to Wai Kuen. "You have done me a big favor. Good-by for now. You will see me soon again."

It was twenty paces to the door, and Alec, self-conscious at last, wondered if they noticed that he was walking on air. But he reached the door without stumbling, opened it, stood still on the step outside. How good the freshness was! He took off his hat and scratched his head—the gesture of a conqueror. Then he turned back to face the awakening. Only two Chinese were visible. Wai Kuen was back in his office, bending over his ledger.

"By the way," said Alec, "we forgot something. I can give you that fifty dollars now."

"That's right," said Wai Kuen. "I forgot. That's fine."

Alec handed him the marked money and took a deep breath. It was the moment when one shows oneself to the tiger.

"Mr. Wai Kuen," said Alec, in a voice not nearly so smooth as Mr. Bardy's, "you are under arrest. I place you under arrest."

For once the heavy eyes moved, moved quickly.

"What!" he shrieked and again, *"What!"* His mouth stayed open in his surprise—wide, black, disgusting.

"Come with me, please," said Alec, "to the front of the store."

"Who are you?"

"One of the Mounted Police."

"My God! My God! My God!" . . . He had darted away. That half obese form had suddenly filled with energy and darted past Alec, and, still shrieking, into the cashier's cage. Alec was but two paces behind, but the door clipped shut. Alec could not locate the catch. Through the bars he saw Wai Kuen reach into the waste-basket and tear something. Then fright mastered the Oriental and he ran out at the opposite door and toward the stairs. Alec, as he followed, wondered why his friends had not come in. A minute seemed immeasurable time. He almost laughed at Wai Kuen's surprising agility as he scooted across the floor. Ah! there! the front door opened. It was Ivry.

"Stop them! *Them!*" and he pointed to the two Chinese servants disappearing toward a rear door. But Parrot was there. Alec ran upstairs, followed by Sergeant Frees. Inspector Meeker took charge below.

Alec, running, was lost for a moment in a maze of rooms, found a dropped slipper, heard a noise, and came upon Wai Kuen in a back chamber, in bed, his head disappearing under the covers. Frees came running with the handcuffs.

"It's all right," said Alec. "Will he need those?"

"I'd sooner trust a rat," said the non-commissioned mind. "Chase, this is the best day's work you ever did."

By long preparation and laborious burrowings, the Mounted Police had undermined a stronghold of destructive vice. It toppled with a crash. For his sensational career as opium-monger and breaker of laws, Wai Kuen was sentenced to four years in the penitentiary. On the same day an automobile thief was given seven.

But even four years was a serious interruption of business to the numerous firms that had profited by Wai Kuen's prosperity, and influences were set at work to reduce this inconsiderable sentence to nothing. A petition, couched in terms so flattering to the dope-wholesaler's character as to make jailing him appear a crime against innocence, was presented.

The judge, in passing sentence, said to Wai Kuen:

"The sentence would be heavier were it not for the fact that your friends have presented a wonder-

fully worded petition for leniency. It is signed by people I cannot ignore. Wholesalers have asked me to be lenient in your case. Some are men of standing in the city, and they have expressed their surprise and regret over your position. I will allow this petition to be filed and later you may get some additional advantage from it."

The newspapers felt differently. They were unable to see that any of the proofs of wholesale traffic in drugs, a crime against law and morals, were consistent with the business firms' claims of Wai Kuen's childlike beauty of soul. They harshly denied that his success through a whole decade made a claim on mercy. And they regretted that the long, laborious, and expensive work of the Mounted Police should go for nothing.

In the Mounted Police barracks there was some despondency.

"What did I tell Meeker?" said Frees to Ivry. "Didn't I tell him that something like this would happen?"

"Yes," said Ivry, whom the very fact of the petition hit hard, "and so why are you so excited about it when it happens?"

"Because it smells to heaven. Skunk hits one just as bad, no matter how often you get it."

"Wai Kuen smells like attar of roses to me, compared with the petitioners," said Ivry.

"You're right," said Frees. "To whitewash a man like that seems like the ultimate stink to me."

"What I cannot see," said Ivry, "is how a wonderfully worded petition, even when signed by peo-

ple one cannot ignore, changes the nature of a crime."

Frees looked at Ivry. "You're a sarcastic beggar," he said.

"No, I'm sick," said Ivry. "The world doesn't seem quite worth living in to-day."

Frees knew that he was seeing the genuine Ivry at last. "Cheer up," he said, putting a hand on Ivry's shoulder. "We can fight the appeal."

"Yes," said Ivry, "we can always fight."

And this was done. The Mounted Police contested the appeal and had the satisfaction of seeing Wai Kuen's term increased instead of diminished—to seven years, the maximum possible under a still too lenient law. The newspapers praised the "years of patient work on the part of the Force," leading up to the dissolution of this particular dope-selling ring, and the commissioner, in special recognition of the men's services, wrote in his report:

> It will be noted that very careful preparations were made to insure the successful carrying through of this case and I cannot speak too highly of the excellent work performed by Detective-Sergeant Frees, Detective-Corporals Ivry and Chase, and Constable Perrot.

Courtesy of Department of the Interior

THE HONORARY COMMANDANT PRESENTS A MEDAL

CHAPTER XX

June 1, 1928

"AND do you remember the place that spring?" asked Bill, with a deep guffaw. "The barracks swimming in water and the horses mired in that nice black gumbo! Why, even the old Wascana River ran in spring!"

"The only time of year that ditch did run," said Parrot.

"Let's make Ivry sing his song about that," suggested Alec.

So they got Ivry to his feet. The tune was a corruption of "Twenty-nine Blue Bottles," but the words were the corporal's, and most of them unprintable because it was a song in praise of the officers at Regina:

> Of all the famous rivers with which our planet groans
> The greatest is Wascana, well named the Pile O'Bones,
> The greatest is Wascana, fair river of the plains
> Which bathes august Regina—but only when it rains.

The real interest of the piece did not begin until the fifth stanza, introducing Staff-Sergeant Head.

It was nearing midnight of the last day of May, and Bill Seaton was giving a party in a private din-

ing-room of the Vancouver Club. Bill was temporarily a bachelor, having left his wife and his son, aged nearly eleven months, in Ottawa, while he visited the coast on business. He had found Vancouver full of Mounted Policemen. The party was a natural result.

Every man of the thirty-four attending was in high spirits, for a famous case had just been successfully concluded. It had been long suspected throughout the West that dealers in a certain household commodity were acting in illegal combine. The Federal Force had been set to collecting data. In every division and from every sub-district the evidence proved that a vast injustice was being wreaked upon the people to their cost. A legal war was declared. For weeks a great battle had been raging in the Vancouver court. The powerful firms engaged illustrious talent and by strategy and assault sought to intimidate and destroy the thin red line of Mounted Police.

But the line held. Fines were levied upon the combine, totaling two hundred thousand dollars. The Senior Crown Counsel praised the Force, saying that he had never seen more intelligent and efficient cooperation. It was an immense victory, important for the country and gratifying to the Force, and now the thirty-four were to return to their divisions. The party was very opportune.

Bill was not a bad host. His income amounted to a fair fraction of all his guests' pay-checks put together. For Canada, having gone power-mad, was slowly electrifying the country, and Bill had made a

killing in stocks by adding his Mounted Police experience to his father's advice. But he well knew whom to thank. Without "that kick in the pants" as he always called his Police discipline, he would have lacked the physique, the capacity for long stretches of application, and the ability to bluff, which had carried him ahead.

He felt a genuine glow at the sight of the uniform, an inextinguishable pang of romance. Not the delicate and fanciful emotion sometimes miscalled romance, but that deep memory of desire and rushing hope and swift regret, the embodiment of the most near-to-life days he would ever know. College, he saw now, would never have given him the same sharpness and color and warmth he had got from those realities which he had cursed so at the time but now blessed as the very heart of life's finest flame. So, as he looked down the double line of men to whom he was related by membership in this fraternity, he felt a deep joy beneath the merriment.

"Do you remember that first night in Bowles, kid?"

He was talking to Parrot on his left. Parrot was twenty-two, yet still with that touch of boyishness on his features and figure which had recently disturbed the girls of the British Isles. For Parrot had traveled, too. With an officer and eight other N. C. O.'s and men he had been detailed as one of the party to furnish a guard for the Canadian Pavilion at the great British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, taking part in the Lord Mayor's procession, facilitating the arrangement for visits by Their Majesties

and other distinguished visitors, and being exposed to fusillades of admiration for seven months. If not all fun, it was a good way of visiting the Old Country, and Parrot's gallantry was not all purely from compassion. The boy, whose apparent aim six years before had been to slip pleasurably downhill, was now wide-minded and responsible, a confirmed Mounted Policeman.

Beside him sat Stud, on furlough, not only sunbrowned but sun-dyed, big, and a little quiet. For the first time in his life Stud had money, a thousand dollars or more in his pocket, saved in the North. He expected to have it for about three weeks. When he and Murison and the other Northern men had landed at Montreal, four of them had taken a taxi to Chicago to see a fight. The money had St. Vitus's ailment. It would not keep quiet in the pocket. Stud had banked what was left. But when Bill had wired him an invitation to the party, it was too much. Obtaining leave, he had sped across the continent.

"What of it?" he had said to the more careful Alec. "In a couple of months I'll be going North again."

It had interested Alec to notice the bigness of Stud's thoughts. He knew the Indian and the Eskimo. He argued in terms of races, and dreamed in hemispheres. His most matured tastes would hardly attain the level of culture where Ivry's began, but he had grown more than Ivry, more than any of the other boys. There was a strangeness about him, in unguarded moments, Alec thought, as if the North had exacted some promise, some pledge to remem-

ber, of which he was saying nothing. Parrot felt this even more, for Parrot had been closest to him once. Now there was a distance, but only in the moments when he forgot himself and fell into a thoughtfulness.

Alec was in a sort of seventh heaven. So much of his time was engulfed in the pursuit of darkness, that a chance to be with the boys, to appear as himself in the open, was doubly fine. Alec was little known. Both by nature and because of his work he came into contact with few of his fellows in the Force, and he could appreciate rather than contribute the vivid touches, the gay thrusts and parries of this party. Handsome was the popular sort. Like the Force itself, Alec would never be known, for the current of his worth showed little surface, and that not a sparkling one. But this did not prevent his keen enjoyment. Alec thought long and deeply about the Force's future. He foresaw its coming increase in usefulness. He had already submitted plans for a much more closely knit detective unit. His views were as broad as Canada. He sat back, ate little, and talked less. But he was happy.

Ivry, strange to say, was the life of the party—or one of its lives. His nature had steadily mellowed. Few comprehended his fearless and rather solitary spirit, but he did not shroud it, as he once had done, in cynical and cutting remarks, and the glamour of his personality became more evident. He created in all an emotion of respect, not quite the emotion that all had for the warmer-hearted Ralstead, but nevertheless a friendliness. Parrot had been right, that

time in the Chink's café with the harvesters: Ivry should have shown his friendly self sooner.

Murison had not been able to come, and Bill suggested that they send him a telegram. A wire was also dispatched to Corporal Scotty, a Northern man now stationed in the Canadian Legation at Washington, a lone outpost of the Force whose situation was at times more trying than the detachments on Hudson Bay.

Shortly before twelve, Bill tinkled on his tumbler for attention.

"Fellows," he said, "nobody at this party is going to be allowed to make a speech except me, and if you know me, you know it's going to be brief. But this is too big a moment for the outfit for us to pass it by. In about three minutes the Force goes back into Saskatchewan."

Bill was stopped here by cheers.

"As we used to hear from old Tappet—and he can't have me up for disrespect now—there were three narrow squeaks in this outfit's life: that blessed march over the plains, the year they chose Herchmer to reorganize in 'eighty-six, and in nineteen-twenty when we had to prove to the whole of Canada that we could carry on. Each crisis was succeeded by an increase in the outfit's importance, the start of a bigger era. Well, fellows, I believe that in one minute starts a bigger era than any. It's going to mean more opportunity for you, a better service to the country. My work of the last three years has shown me what consolidation can bring about in savings and efficiency. The people of Alberta will find out

from Saskatchewan and follow her lead, and maybe other provinces will. I am going to propose a toast, fellows, to the man whose leadership and devotion have done the most to bring this about. You all know what I mean—the commissioner. But before that, men, fill your glasses and let us drink to the long life and success of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police."

With a swift pushing back of chairs, they rose.

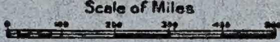
Date Due

MAY 31 1978

JUN 3 1978

Prepared by the
Natural Resources Intelligence Service
Dept of the Interior, Ottawa, Canada.

MAP OF THE
DOMINION OF CANADA
Scale of Miles



PS8523 .05S6
Longstreth, Thomas Morris, 1886-
Sons of the Mounted Police

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